

New York Saturday Journal

A HOME WEEKLY FOR WINTER NIGHTS AND SUMMER DAYS.

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Vol. VI.

E. F. Beadle,
William Adams,
Publishers.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 8, 1876.

TERMS IN ADVANCE.

One copy, four months, \$1.00
One copy, one year, 2.00
Two copies, one year, 3.00

No. 304.

VANDYKE'S NEW YEAR'S LEAF.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH.

Have you heard of the leaf that Vandyke
Turned one stormy New Year's night,
Seated alone in his cozy parlor—
In the coal fire's ruddy light?
If you have not, I will tell you
In a rhyme that shall be brief;
Though I fear he will not thank me
For this tale of his New Year's leaf.

He was a devotee of fashion,
Did not care for pounds and pence;
Feted all who won his favor,
Spent thrift in the widest sense!
Quite a lion in upper-tendom,
Never won a heart by story,
And 'twas said by hundreds daily:
"Beggars steal Hugh Vandyke's wealth."

"Charity is Vandyke's failing,
It will prove his ruin some day,
Never from his door a beggar
Alms had he turned away;
And they came from every quarter
Of the vast commercial mart,
A despised and tattered legion—
Pensioners on Vandyke's heart!"

"Too much money to the beggars!"
All around me people say;
And to-night but fifty dollars
Have I for the coming day.
Fifty dollars! what a trifle!
Twenty more I might have had,
Had I from my door this morning
Alms sent that whining lad."

"This is New Year's night, a new leaf
I will turn and keep it down;
During this year not one dollar
To the winners of the town!"
And that night he turned his new leaf
Smoking by his roaring fire;
Heard the snow against the window,
Heard the storm-winds mounting higher.

All at once a low rap started
Vandyke from his reverie;
And he left his cozy arm chair,
Indignation in his eye:
"Tis a whiner," he was saying,
As he opened the parlor door;
Was it specter he confronted?
Pallid face, and nothing more!

Said a low voice: "Mother's dying!
When for her the angels come,
They will shiver o'er her pillow,
For no fire warms our home."
"Let her—!" Vandyke paused abruptly—
Took the child so cold and fair,
Drew her in and shut the portal,
Sat her in his velvet chair.

Chafed her hands and clothed her warmly;
All unfinished was his curse!
Sent her to the dying mother,
With the contents of his purse!
And she smiled as he dismissed her—
She, a "whiner of the town."
"Where's my New Year's leaf?" he murmured,
"God! I could not keep it down!"

Then he moved the ancient arm-chair
Closer to the roaring fire;
Heard the mad winds mounting higher,
In the golden-tinted flight;
Dreaming like a child, he slept;
No man's New Year's night was happier
Than the one Hugh Vandyke kept.

Happy Harry,

THE WILD BOY OF THE WOODS;

OR,
THE PIRATES OF THE NORTHERN LAKES.

BY OLL COOMES.

AUTHOR OF "IDAHO TOM," "DAKOTA DAN,"
"BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HURRICANE,"
"HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ENGLISH BRIG-OF-WAR.

HAPPY HARRY was soon far beyond the glade where he had so cunningly outwitted the king's officer and messenger. His face was all aglow with joy and triumph as he sped away through the woods, fast as his legs would carry him. He never ceased running until he reached the lake shore, where, out of breath, he sat down to rest and examine the button that the unsuspecting Englishman had entrusted to his care. "Great hoppin' hornits, Belshazzar!" he exclaimed, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "This is jest more'n fun, arn't it, ole chum? And, mortal pizen! didn't I do it up to that British slicker'n a peeled apple? I didn't know I war so good reachin' out with my voice. I didn't, for a sacred fact. By George! he war a kind of a spy, that red-coat, and I'd ort to 'a' taken him prisoner; but then, what did I want with him after I got the feller's secret? Ho! out here, ole button. What news from the headquarters of the ole king's army? Open, my pretty silver bauble, and let it out."

After repeated efforts, he succeeded in unscrewing the button, which he found to be a mere shell of silver, the cavity of which was filled with a neatly-folded paper of the finest quality.

"Sweet Jerusalem! there lays the kernel of the silver nut!" exclaimed the youth, looking at the paper as if half afraid to touch it, for fear it would vanish like a bubble.

While thus occupied, Belshazzar uttered a low, plaintive whine.

A twig cracked in the undergrowth not far away, and was succeeded by a rustling of foliage.

Happy Harry sprang to his feet, slipped the button into his pocket, and cocked his rifle.

A man emerged from the undergrowth, and a look of profound astonishment mounted his face as he confronted the young wood-tramp.

The man was Long Beard, the Giant Woodman.

"Hoppin' hornits!" burst from the boy's lips, and he dug his knuckles into his eyes, as if to remove a mist of doubt gathered over them, "it can't be so—it's a mistake, it is, for an ugly fact."



"Hullo, my little wail, you are safe, thank God!" said the giant, advancing toward him.

"Hullo, my little wail, you are safe, thank God!" said the giant, advancing toward him.

"Safe? why, that's no name for it," replied Harry. "Great hornits! but I'm proper delighted and majestically glad to meet you. I am, for a fact, govenir. Give us your ten-acre paw—there! ooh!—squeeze gently; you've a bear's hug in that fist. But, whar ye be keepin' your corporosity, general?"

"In the woods, on the lake, along the shore, looking for you."

"And I've been lookin' for you, general."

"Well, the objects of our search have been found. What news have you, Harry?"

"Nothin' but some good news; but wasn't them a smashin' set of fellers we bunked with t'other night at the cave?"

"A notorious set of scoundrels, I must say," returned the giant, emphatically.

"They had you haltered up pretty snug, hadn't they, Big Beard?"

"Ay, my boy; and did you know what I do of that man, Kirby Kale, you would not wonder that I was haltered up so securely."

"You don't say, do you, general? Why, great hornits! arn't they all Englishmen?"

"Most of them."

"And is Kirby Kale?"

"Yes; and as mean a man as ever breathed."

"Wal, by hornits!—but, say, Big Beard, did you see that feller in the cave with his head tied up and arm in a sling?"

"I did; and I saw him spurn your body with his foot when you lay apparently dead in the cavern."

"That was the traitor, William Mucklewee, Esquire, whom I banged over the head and sent a-bouncing and a-waltzin' into the lake—the very demon that tried to betray Rankin into the savages' power. But, Big Beard, I think them devils at the cave are waitin' for some awfully bloody work, I do, for a serious fact. They are English soldiers, I know they are, for I saw their uniforms stickin' around the cavern one place and another. I think they're waitin' there in disguise for some orders to strike—in fact, I know they are; and them orders are to come through a messenger expected from Canada. And, would you believe it, general, sure as I'm livin', me and that messenger had a little difference awhile ago. He just scooped me right in a prisoner of war, in the name of the king, the sun, moon, and stars. I wasn't hard to take, and Belshazzar, he just tucked his tail atwixt his legs and away we marched. But, suddenly, my friend of the king had a summons from different quarters to yield himself up to superior force, that war hid in the woods not far away. Before he could reply, I turned and informed him he war in what might be termed a snap, and so on. Then I told him who he was, and whar he war goin', and that I belonged at the cave and was out lookin' for him, and that I'd let him capter me for the fun of it, and a whole lot of just sich—sich funny things. This tickled the royal major of his majesty's army, and quicker'n wink he jerked a button off his coat and handed it to me, with orders to deliver the same to Captain Kirby Kale. The fool thought he war surrounded by an army of American scouts, though not one of them could be seen, and he thought the jig war up with him. Well, I took the button, and away I went, lickety-to-split, leavin' the great English dispatch-bearer from across the briny deep, waitin' for the Americans to file out of the wood and salt him down. But nary scout fled. The fact of it war just here: there wasn't a scout within miles of him, and for

all I know, that poor, deluded man from the moon is standin' thar in the openin' yit."

"You tricked him with that tongue of yours, did you?" asked Long Beard.

"Didn't I, though, general?" replied Harry, with a sly wink. "I jist had 'em demandin' his surrender all around, and you ort to 'a' heard the one with a creaky voice. Dogged if I didn't like to overdo it on that voice. But, here's the button, Big Beard, already unscrewed, ready for an investigation of its contents."

He handed the button to the giant, who removed the paper therefrom. He found the latter to be of the finest texture, capable of being compressed into a very small space. It was nearly a foot square when spread open. Upon the upper half was traced, by a skillful hand, a map of all that portion of the United States and territories lying north of the forty-second degree of north latitude, also a portion of Canada. There were red dots upon it, which doubtless represented the location of the American posts of defense. It was also traced with blue lines, supposed to represent the anticipated routes of the English army in their invasion of the republic. Beneath this map was an explanation written in cipher, which the giant at once set to work upon to translate. It seemed as though he had had some experience in such things before, for in a few minutes he had unraveled the secret of the whole. And what a secret worth knowing it was to the citizens of the American republic!

It proved to be a key to the proposed operations of the English army in the United States, and which, if successful, would place the whole northern frontier and the great lakes in British possession!

On the back of this map was written, also in cipher, these words:

"Captain Kirby Kale—money secured General Hull's retreat from Canada, and I believe it will secure the surrender of Detroit. Try it, at any rate, if your present movement should prove a failure."

"Great, hoppin' hornits!" exclaimed Harry, when Long Beard had revealed the secrets of the paper; "afore such a thing shall happen, I'll run my very soul out. I'll start this holy hour for the nearest military post. Wouldn't you, Long Whiskers, if you were a little frisky boy?"

"I might, it is true, Harry. But then, this is a matter of such vital importance to our country that no risks must be encountered in delivering it to the proper authorities. There is no great hurry in the matter, therefore you can afford to take your time and run no risks. Now, if you will go with me to the Pleiades Islands you can take a boat and reach Lake-town in half the time you can go there on foot."

"Just as you say, Long Beard. I'm alers willin' to obey them as are older than me. There's my dear, ole bunkmate, Davy Darrett, whom I hain't seen for a month, who's alers right on sich things as b'long to the border."

"Then come along with me."

They moved along the shore and in a few minutes came to where the giant's little schooner was tied up. Boarding her, they at once put to sea.

As they pulled out from shore Belshazzar uttered a low whine, and glancing back toward the shore, Long Beard and Harry saw the cause of his uneasiness. An Indian girl, whom Harry recognized as the princess Eleelah, was standing on a prominent point of the shore, waving her hand toward them in a violent manner; and the very instant she ceased she threw herself over into the lake.

"Oh, great hornits!" cried Happy Harry; "it's Eleelah, and she's drowned herself!"

"Nay, nay, Harry," responded Long Beard; "that girl is our friend. Those gestures were intended as a warning. Look! she is swimming around the base of that rock, evidently to reach the opposite side unobserved. Enemies to us must be approaching the point from whence we embarked—ah, there they come now!"

Fully twenty men, with flashing uniforms and bristling muskets, emerged from the great woods.

It was a company of British soldiers, and at their head Harry could distinguish the forms of Captain Kirby Kale and his late captor, the English major.

"Halt there!" cried Kale, at the top of his lungs, and the soldiers brought their muskets into position.

But Long Beard and Harry paid no attention to his order.

"Halt, or we'll fire!" again shouted Kale. Quicker than a flash Happy Harry threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired at the foe. A soldier fell at the feet of his comrades.

The next instant a line of smoke burst from the English ranks and the crash of twenty muskets rolled along the waves. Like hail their bullets pattered against the side of the little schooner, but Long Beard and Harry having sought shelter in the cabin escaped unharmed.

The giant at once ran up another sail and soon they were out of reach of the enemy's guns. Then the two again went on deck, and, to their surprise, saw that a number of savages had joined the English, and all together were holding a consultation.

With his field-glass Long Beard scanned the allies closely, and while thus engaged he happened to run his eye along the coast, when, to his surprise and astonishment, he discovered a small sail bearing down the wind toward them.

It was over a league away, yet he could see distinctly that it was a brig carrying a gun fore and aft and flying the English colors!

"By heavens, Harry!" exclaimed the giant, "an English vessel has gained our lake! Look off here and you'll see her."

Happy Harry took the glass and, having scanned the sail, confirmed his friend's statement.

"Strikes me general," he said, "that we're in a fair way for a bit of a naval engagement."

"The chances for a fight are good, but our condition to stand up to a brig carrying heavy guns is not very promising of good results. Our best hold lies in flight, and I shall press every inch of canvas into service and attend promptly to the helm and our course. It is now one o'clock, and it will take us until evening to reach the Pleiades."

"Well, all right, general; drive on your gig, and if thar's anything that we can assist you in doin' make a clean breast of it and we'll be on hand like a dozen warts."

"Keep a watch on the brig, Harry."

"I'll do so, general; I will, for a solemn fact."

Half an hour had passed in silence when he suddenly exclaimed:

"There, by hornits! Captain Kale has succeeded in hailing the brig and two boats have been sent ashore."

"Then depend upon it, every effort will be made to overhaul us, Harry," said Long Beard, "and you in that English messenger's hands and I in Kale's, we would fare badly."

Suddenly the boom of a cannon came down the wind, and glancing back, the fugitives saw a cloud of smoke hanging upon the brig's prow.

Long Beard took the glass and brought it to bear upon the enemy. A cry burst from his lips.

"She has sighted us, and is giving chase! Now for liberty, an English prison, or death, Harry!" he exclaimed, a stern, desperate look kindling in his eyes, and his great form growing majestic with the firm resolutions that strung every nerve and inspired his soul.

The race now began in earnest between the little schooner and the brig-of-war. Silent and firm the giant woodman stood at the helm, while Happy Harry stood at gazing away at the pursuing enemy with a kind of a vague fascination, at the same time humming softly to himself:

"My name was Captain Kidd
When I sailed, when I sailed."

CHAPTER XV.

THE PLEIADES NIGHT-WATCH.

CAPTAIN ROBERT RANKIN could not forgive himself for having made known the secret, or rather giving up the dispatches, that led the fair little Tempy to brave the dangers of a long journey by land and water.

He walked the floor in feverish agony. Margery endeavored to calm his emotions.

"Tempy is not in half the danger you are, Captain Rankin," she said, "and I pray you will not worry yourself into a fever over her departure. She is well acquainted with the lake, and I daresay will reach her destination in safety."

"Not before night, though."

"She will do well if she reaches it by to-morrow night."

"Well, I cannot rest easy until I know harm has not befallen that brave young girl who virtually saved my life. But, kind friend, how soon do you expect your friends in?"

"Not before evening. Father usually returns about sunset."

"Is your father a fisherman?"

"Simply a reclus, replied Margery, evasively. "He has a penchant for secluded places, hence the reason that we dwell here among the romantic Pleiades."

"And is this secluded life agreeable to you and your sister, Tempy?"

"We love our father, and are contented wherever he is happiest."

Around this lonely island cabin and its lovely inmates there hung a mystery to Captain Rankin. He would have had it solved, for already he had become deeply interested in the family's history. He did not hesitate to admit that he had fallen desperately in love with the fair Tempy, although he tried, at first, to convince himself that it was but a momentary infatuation, and that the women might be the children of some old outcast hiding there, away from the hounds of the law. But his better judgment would assert itself, and the exalted innocence and honor that surrounded the women stood confessed.

Margery extended every kindness in her power to alleviate the suffering of her guest, and in her gentle administrations there was a power as of magic. To him, she and Tempy had been good Samaritans—Sisters of Mercy—reserved in nothing that makes woman noble, gentle, loved and companionable.

The hours dragged wearily along to Rankin. He watched the sun changing in the doorway, and at times it seemed as though an hour made no difference in the position of the light and shadow.

But, despite his impatience, the sun was gradually sinking westward, and finally dropped behind the tree tops. Then the twilight shadows began to gather in the cabin. A light breeze, sweetened with the perfume of wild flowers, stirred the green drapery of the trees. Away out along the margin of the island a bull-frog sent forth his harsh, rasping croak, while a solitary cricket chirruped shrilly under the door-step, its ungrateful music harmonizing with the gathering gloom and depressing solitude.

Margery sat down at the open window, and gazing out over the lake, hummed a low, plaintive tune to herself. Her thoughts were far away; she was soon in deep meditation.

Meanwhile Rankin's thoughts turned upon his own situation. The silence and shadows filled him with vague forebodings.

Both were suddenly startled by the boom of a cannon breaking upon the silence. It rolled down from the north with a stunning shock.

"Oh, my God!" cried Margery, and she sprang to her feet and ran out of the cabin.

Rankin rose and followed her, tottering almost as he went.

From a point where they could obtain a partial view of the twilight-enshroued lake, they beheld two sails. One of them, a little schooner, was already within a few rods of the island. The other, a brig carrying the English colors, and a gun fore and aft, stood on the northern extremity of the group of islands, over a mile away. It had evidently been anchored there, for all sails had been lowered.

"That is father's sail approaching there," exclaimed Margery, in delight.

"Do you know that other one off north?" asked Rankin.

"I do not; it's a stranger. Father will know, perhaps."

The little schooner soon turned into the shore. A tall man, with a long, snowy beard, stepped ashore, followed by a boy and a large dog. It was Long Beard, Harry and his dog.

Long Beard, then, was Margery's father.

Having secured his little craft by means of

a heavy rope, he turned and proceeded with the boy and his dog toward the cabin, to be met by Margery and Rankin.

Before a word of greeting had passed between the father and daughter, Harry shouted, as his eyes fell upon Captain Rankin:

"Hurrah for glory! hoppin' horns! there he is, general; the very identikil chap that war in the big fight with us on the raft."

"Yes, I am the man, my good fellow," responded Rankin, extending his hand toward the youth. "I remember you very well, my brave and peerless youth. The last I saw of you was during the fight on that trap of a raft."

"I have a distinct remembrance of that raft, captain, and a little unpleasantness we had on it. That were a gory old fight; it was for a stubborn fact."

"Yes, and I have wondered a hundred times how you and Mucklewee came out of the fight." "Mucklewee!" exclaimed Harry, indignant; "dam his hide! he got off with a basted head, I'm sorry to say."

"You speak severely of my guide, Harry." "Your guide!" the youth replied, with disdain. "Captain, didn't you know that he war a traitor?"

"I did not, Harry." "It's a holy fact, captain; it war him that got you into an unfounded muss with the redskins. He is a British emissary."

Rankin was confounded by this intelligence, and but for the sober look on Harry's face would have disputed his word. He hurriedly connected different events that had occurred since he and Mucklewee had been together, and out of the links thus collected he gathered sufficient material to construct a chain of strong evidence corroborating Harry's story.

Meanwhile Margery and her father had stepped aside, when the former at once informed her parent of what had been going on since his departure. The giant seemed deeply affected by the news of Tempy's departure; at the same time, however, he expressed his approval of her going forth on a journey of such importance to their country.

"But at the same time she may be in less danger than we are in," he said, in concluding his remarks on that subject, and introducing another.

"Why so, father? Does that sail off to the north menace our safety?"

"It certainly does; it is an English brig-of-war, and has chased us since one o'clock, several times firing upon us."

"How does it come that English war-vessels are on this lake, father?"

"Why, Margery, war has been fully inaugurated, and the armies are moving. Hull has relinquished the conquest of Malden, and retreated on Port Detroit. The English are already across the frontier; but our greatest danger, Margery, does not come from that source," he spoke in a low tone. "Night before last I was a prisoner in the stronghold of a company of British soldiers under command of none other than Captain Kale, alias Sir Eugene Nealmurphy."

"Oh, God of mercy!" cried Margery, clasping her brow, while her face turned ghastly pale and her form reeled as if about to fall. Her father drew her arm in his to support her, and then narrated the story of his capture by Kirby Kale, and his release by Happy Harry. Finally matters were explained all around, when Long Beard led the way to the cabin.

He introduced Harry to Margery and his secluded home.

The youth was welcomed by Margery in words that filled his young heart with joy. He had never before received such praise and thanks as Margery bestowed upon him. He felt that he was indeed a hero.

Margery soon had an ample supper prepared for all, when Harry and Rankin were invited to the board. The Wild Boy and his host did justice to the meal, for they had fasted since morning.

Before night had closed in Long Beard made certain of the brig-of-war's position. He found it was still standing off, north of the Pelelades. But he knew that the enemy would not remain idle during the night—that they would, in all probability, send out a boat to reconnoiter and scout among the islands. To defeat the success of such an expedition was the main object with the giant, for if his cabin was discovered, he knew its destruction would be inevitable.

Happy Harry, ever ready for adventure, volunteered to keep on the move with his dog during the night, venturing the assertion that no boat could approach undiscovered.

The night was dark—extremely dark, the sky being overcast with a heavy, gray mist. Everything was as still as though the heavy gloom subdued the very pulses of the air.

Like two shadows, Harry and his dog crept through the undergrowth that skirted the margin of the little green-clad islands; like shadows they stole along the beach. Now and then they stopped to listen—the master with his hand upon his dog's head. The animal's hearing was most acute; it had detected a suspicious sound, a toss of the head, or a low whine would announce the fact to his master.

Thus for hours they continued their watch around the island. Harry was growing drowsy and careless for the want of excitement when his attention was suddenly attracted by the surging of the waves along the bank.

"There's no wind to make them waves," the youth reasoned with himself, "and what's makin' them tickle the shore is more'n I can tell, less than's sumthin' in the strait between the two islands. If it wasn't so wickedly dark a fall and his dog might see sumthin'. Oh, great horns, Bell, I hope nothin' will fall these folks here. That poor woman looks sad enough anyhow, and then the old general's taking on 'bout his father that's gone to Laketown. Gracious! if we ever git through this bald headed darkness alive, I'll strike out after that little gal of his'n. And we'll find her, too, or expand a blood-vessel in the attempt. 'Shi—harkee, 'Shaz—ar!—jiggered if there isn't—if there doesn't come a canoe creeping through the darkness like a spell of death! And now who is it!—and what are they goin'! Dog their riggin's, they've got muffled oars, and that means devilry the world over. They're a pisen pack from the brig. They're Englishers come down here to reconnoiter, and I'll be confounded if I know whether to git 'em over here and exterminate 'em, or fire into 'em and let 'em slide. But then I guess I'll do neither one; I'll trick 'em," and so saying, he called out:

"Boat ahoy!"

The voice seemed to come from the opposite island, six rods or more away.

"Ay! ay!" was the response from the barge.

"Who goes there?" demanded the voice on the island.

The crash of half a dozen muskets was the response. A groan issued from the island. The boat turned in toward the shore, and Harry laughed to himself.

"Guess we laid him out," he heard one of the unknown boatmen say.

Quicker than we can record the fact, Happy Harry had stripped off his clothing, and, with his knife between his teeth, entered the water and struck out directly toward the enemy's boat. Belshazzar at his side, both swam in silence.

The boat, a six-oared barge, belonging to the brig-of-war, reached the bank, when all the occupants but one landed and went to searching the undergrowth for the body of their supposed victim. The one left to watch the boat remained seated within it. His musket was leaning against the side. The oars hung loose in the rowlocks. The stillness was unbroken save by the noise made by the men among the rustling bushes.

Thus several moments passed; then a tiny wave broke against the side of the boat and chafed the bank. The soldier noticed it. Instinctive precaution made him a good soldier.

He recognized, in an instant, the fact that there was no air to stir a ripple on the lake, and very naturally concluded that the water had been disturbed by something in it. He bent his head and listened; he heard the very faintest noise like that which is made by the breast of a small animal cleaving the waters as it glides along. He peered into the deep, dark night around him, and upon the bosom of the water; not two feet from the side of the canoe, he imagined he saw a round, spherical object resting upon the waves. Mechanically he put out his hand toward it, when to his horror he felt a pair of sharp fangs close like a vise upon it.

A cry of horrible agony escaped the man's lips, but Belshazzar held on to his hand, while Happy Harry, springing up into the boat, pitched the man overboard.

The youth was instantly warned of other dangers by the hasty approach of the men on shore. Seizing an oar he pushed the boat out upon the bosom of the night-enveloped waters. His dog followed him. The unfortunate soldier swam ashore and briefly as possible told the story of his mishap.

Then the party discovered that they had been entrapped—at least enticed ashore upon an island from whence they could not escape.

The soldiers heard the boat with the unknown enemy retreating, and discharged their muskets in the direction of the sound, but in the darkness they shot at random and Harry escaped untouched.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BESIEGED CABIN.

HAPPY HARRY HAD crossed the channel and made fast his boat, hurried to the cabin of Long Beard and reported his adventure.

The giant at once became very uneasy, for should the enemy discover his location escape would be impossible.

"I must get away from here," he said. "It will be death—yea! more than death—to me and my children, should we fall into the power of the English. We must escape under cover of this night. I will move our effects most needed from the house and place them on board the schooner and then we will embark for some southern port."

"I am afraid, friend Long Beard," remarked Rankin, "that if you once get away from these islands the frigate will run you down. Perhaps we could dodge the enemy here, at least until your daughter Tempy returns from the post. Of course, Colonel Miller will give her a strong escort, and this assistance will enable us to get off."

"Tempy may not get back for a week, and possibly not at all," answered the giant, half desponding.

"I'll tell you, general," said Harry, his face aglow with joy and boyish excitement; "if you'll just stay here and stick to the island like molasses to a boy's hair, dog my cats if I don't either kapter or sink that British brig—me and Belshazzar will. We'll just get into the lake and h'ist her right over—we'll be a torpedo to that boat; we will, for a fact."

Although he questioned the youth's ability to do even half as much, Long Beard's main reliance was centered upon the Wild Boy of the Woods. He had seen the lad tested under the most trying circumstances—he had seen him perform deeds of daring that none but Happy Harry could have accomplished. So the giant, recluse sent the youthful borderman to watch that the enemy did not effect a landing on his island; and this precaution was not adopted a moment too soon. Those at the brig had heard the firing of musketry down among the Pelelades, and at once dispatched another boat to the scene of action with half a dozen armed men. This boat had just effected a landing when Harry discovered it; and having picked up those left upon the opposite island, a force of a dozen armed men were now ready to invade the retreat of the mysterious Long Beard.

Hurrying back to the cabin, the youth made known his second discovery. Long Beard, now thoroughly alarmed at the proposed to evacuate the island. He could not be induced to attempt a defense, although his cabin had been constructed and provided with every requisite for defensive measures. Something besides a fear of the result of an English invasion seemed to prey upon his mind and that of his daughter, like some awful horror.

To Rankin there appeared to be some secret underlying the whole of this man's fears, and he was at once led to believe that there was a significant mystery connected with his seclusion.

It required but a few moments for the father and daughter to prepare for departure. A change or two of raiment, some cooked food and a few necessities of bedding were all they attempted to carry away with them; and even these would not have been taken had they not been absolutely necessary for the comfort of the party during the journey. They left the cabin in no disorder. On the contrary it was in its usual primness, so that the invaders would not suspect it of being deserted.

Harry led the way along the dim path toward the point where Long Beard had left the boat—Margery and Rankin following, while the giant brought up the rear. As they neared the water a slight noise arrested Harry's attention.

Stopping still, he cautioned his friends, and requested them to remain standing there until he crept forward and reconnoitered.

Softly he moved away, and for several minutes a deathlike stillness reigned. Finally the lad came back with the startling intelligence that the schooner was in possession of the enemy and that all escape from the island was cut off.

"Then let us go back and do last what we should have done first—intrench ourselves within the cabin," said the giant in a husky tone.

"Govenir, we—that's me and Bell—don't keer about coopin' up to fight. We'll stay outside and bushwhack on the corner—kind of split the attention of the foe should they attack the cabin. If you fellows'll do your duty inside like a dose of p'sen, we'll be a red-hot blister outside, and I'll bet we'll do-

for the red-coats up magnificently. They can't catch me, that's certain, if I've got elbow-room. This island's a little cramped for me to operate on without crowding upon the lake, and the water there's so tarmal thin that it lets a feller in. But go ahead, govenir; scoot back into your cabin and then let into 'em bald-headed jayhawks like a swarm of hornets with fresh sharpened javelins. I've hearn say that a British soldier can't stand fire half as well as an average Yankee-doodler, and I propose to test the matter. Yes, I'll keep outside and run a side-show of my own, general; and I'll bet we'll make 'em think we're runnin' a little judgment-day, too, of our own. Bet you'll hant remember to brag every time little 'Brown Chick' here chirps," and he patted the breech of his boy's rifle significantly.

And so Long Beard, Margery and Captain Rankin returned to the cabin, which had not yet been found by the enemy. Hastening inside, the recluse barred the door, and at once proceeded to put the cabin in the best possible shape for defense. The plugs were removed from the loop-holes that pierced all the four walls of the house. A quantity of water was placed in the middle of the room ready for any emergency in which it might be needed. A lamp was lighted and placed behind a screen where its rays would fall only on an unexpected spot.

The face of Long Beard wore a serious yet determined look. His voice was low and firm, his movements like that of the lion.

Margery's pale face and heavy, mournful eyes evinced the deepest emotions, yet with resolute step she moved about the room arranging things so as to afford every facility for defense.

"Now I am ready," said Long Beard, finally, as he looked to the priming of his rifle.

"Give me a rifle, friend," said Rankin, "that I may assist." And the giant brought him a rifle and brace of pistols.

Five minutes later there came a sharp, violent rap, rap upon the door.

"They are come, father," whispered Margery.

"The enemy were at the door."

"No is there?" demanded Long Beard, "Persons desirous of admittance," was the response.

Long Beard turned to Margery and in a husky tone asked:

"Daughter, did you recognize that voice?"

"Oh, my God, yea! it is his—Eugene Nealmurphy!"

"Yes; Nealmurphy's, alias Captain Kirby Kale's."

Fear seemed to hold the father and daughter spellbound for awhile.

Rap, rap, rap came the summons at the door again.

"I cannot admit you," Long Beard replied, rallying from his momentary stupor with the look of a lion starting from a nap.

"We seek admittance on peaceful measures, but cannot accept a refusal," came from without.

"Then you threaten," replied Long Beard.

"We must be admitted; if you refuse we will be compelled to force an entrance."

"You will do so at your peril."

"We demand admittance in the name of His Royal Majesty the King of England!" and the speaker emphasized his words with a thunderous rap upon the door.

"And I refuse to admit you in the name of His Excellency the President of the American Republic."

The violent crash of musket-butts against the door was the only response. The door, being made of heavy oak boards, however, refused to yield to the terrific blows.

Long Beard thrust the muzzle of a pistol through a loop-hole, and fired into the crowd in front of the cabin. Evidently the shot was without effect, but a violent exclamation of surprise and the rush of feet followed. The party retreated a few paces and poured a volley of shot into the door, but not one of the leaden missiles pierced the hard, oaken barricade.

A deep silence succeeded the crash of musketry, and the English were wondering what effect it had had upon the inmates of the cabin, when they were suddenly surprised by a loud, shrill "chirp, chirp," like that of a half-grown chicken when lost from the rest of the brood. It issued from the thicket to the right. One of the men laughed and said:

"We're disturbing the hen-roost."

At this instant a tongue of flame leaped from the thicket to the left, a rifle rang out on the air, and a cry of mortal agony escaped the lips of one of the soldiers as he fell dead at the feet of his comrades.

"Charge the thicket," thundered the voice of the commandant; "bayonet the assassin!"

With fixed bayonets eleven men charged into the thicket, through the thicket, straight onward until they reached the water's brink. But they found no enemy. They turned and hurried back to the side of their dead comrade.

Four men carried the body down to the boat.

Then the party held a consultation as to their further movements, which resulted in sending to the brig for reinforcements.

In an hour's time five more men landed upon the island, and the attack was renewed upon the cabin. But the defenders were upon the alert, and met them with a sharp and deadly fire, forcing them to retire under cover of the woods with three men killed and wounded. Here they again held a short deliberation over their repulse, and the probability of success should they attempt to force an entrance by attacking the cabin on both sides—at the door and window. In the midst of their talk that ominous "chirp, chirp" was heard again, this time coming from the direction of the cabin before them; but it was immediately followed by the whip-like report of a rifle behind them, and another of the soldiers fell dead.

"Search the island till that murderous devil is found!" commanded Kale, and he launched away, sword in hand, through the undergrowth, followed by his men.

Like so many hounds just freed from the leash, they beat through the shadowy grove in search of the enemy. The island was not more than three acres in area, but being overgrown with dense vegetation, it afforded the skulker every advantage over his enemy.

The noise made by the soldiers advancing through the thicket enabled Harry to determine their exact position, and getting into their rear, he kept along a few paces behind them. Accustomed to the woods, the youth glided along without creating a sound above the rustling bushes stirred by those that preceded him.

An hour's search proved fruitless. The soldiers had not seen nor heard one thing of the enemy, and under the impression that he had left the island, they returned to the cabin and renewed their demand for its unconditional surrender.

As usual, they were promptly met with a refusal, when a vigorous and determined assault began. The soldiers were more careful,

and took a position close in against the wall where the defenders could not reach them. The only decisive resistance now came from that enemy skulking in the darkness outside. No sooner had they renewed their attack upon the building than that hidden foe began his work of death. Three soldiers were detailed to watch, with cooked rifles, for the flash of his rifle, and shoot him. But they were always deceived by that ominous "chirp." If they sought the enemy at the point whence the sound came, death was sure to come from some other direction.

Captain Kale concentrated all his force against the cabin door. With the heavy butts of their muskets they hammered away unceasingly. At first it was like pounding upon a heavy wall, but the door finally began to rattle upon its huge wooden hinges. This encouraged the besiegers, and they worked away all the harder. The door grew more and more shacking, and finally burst from its hinges and fell inward with a crash.

The tall, majestic form of Long Beard confronted the soldiers in the doorway. He discharged his pistol in their very faces, then he threw the worthless weapon aside, and with his huge fist fought the enemy.

Captain Rankin came to the assistance of his host. Margery crouched with terror on the floor, murmuring a prayer.

The British troops crowded into the room. The sled-hammer fist of the giant beat them down. He seized a musket, and wrenching it from a soldier's hand, swung it around him with deadly effect. The enemy tumbled and fell under its awful sweep. The floor at the giant's feet was piled with struggling men, and slippery with blood. The voice of Kirby Kale was heard above the din of conflict, urging the men on. Rankin fell under a blow. Long Beard fought alone, and inch by inch the foe pressed him back into the room; the tide of battle was slowly but surely turning against him.

The eyes of the great man blazed with an unearthly fire. In the dim light that pervaded the room his tall form and venerable beard rendered him grand and imposing. His very soul seemed inspired with the majesty of strength. He seemed possessed of a charmed life, within that nimbus of unearthly power the foe disappeared, one by one, bleeding and dying.

But this was not to last long. A soldier succeeded in getting in behind the giant and dealing him a blow upon the head. He staggered forward, and before he could recover his footing half a dozen men were upon him. Thus overpowered, he was borne to the floor and securely bound.

"At last, my venerable Long Beard," said Kirby Kale, glaring triumphantly down upon the old man.

A look of loathing—unutterable scorn—was the latter's only response, and even from this Kirby Kale involuntarily started back.

Neither one affected ignorance of the other's identity now—they recognized themselves as foes to the death!

(To be continued—commenced in No. 301.)

WINTER.

Hail! monarch of the leafless crown,
Hare seen save with a gloomy frown,
With ice for scepter, robes of snow,
Thy throne—the stream's arrested flow—
Stern tyrant! whom the hastening sun
Doth vainly strive to melt, by vapors dun
Begirt, a melancholy train,
O'er Nature holding saddest reign.
Lo! of thy rigor birds make plaint,
And all things 'neath thy burden faint.
Nor cheered are they by message cold,
In answer by the north-wind told,
The envoy of thy grievous away,
When thou wouldst drive all hope away
From Nature, yearning to restore
To earth the bliss it knew before.
When summer ruled with empire mild,
And autumn, still a ruddy child,
Ay! cradled 'mong the greenery
Of whispering grove and laden tree.
The brook that prattled to the air
Of golden harvest, scenes as fair
As poet rapt in fancy's maze,
Could scarce enshrine in mortal lays,
Now rude and angry hurls along
The hoppers of his summer song.
The thrush and lark that once replied
His music with their tender shade,
And catching Zephyr's honeyed tone,
The sweet union joining them as one,
Or bound, perchance, in dances slow,
Full faint he wends, and moaning low,
Fit dirge he makes o'er freedom lost,
In joy of which he wistful tossed.
The falling blossoms on his wave,
For water-nymphs to catch and save.
Now stripped of his green bravery,
In piteous plight the weary tree
Is blown upon by mocking winds,
Whom changed now he sighing finds
From those gay playmates welcomed erst
In glee by his young leaves when first
They wore their merry breeze-taught dance,
And broke their feathered lodgers' trance,
What time the eastern wave did gleam
'Neath feet of the golden team.
Not busy now with tender care,
Duties brooding the birds prepare
Their airy cradle, rocked unseen
By Dryad hands behind the screen
Of leafy curtain, where no eye
Of mischief curious may pry.
The thrush that erst with willing voice
Made all the tangle brake rejoice
In echoes of his mellowed strain,
To mope in silence now is fain;
Nor ever pipes from straining throat
The varied wonders of his note.
So bleak the scene, so sad the day,
Too harsh, oh, winter, is thy sway!

Erminie:

OR, THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AN AW-
FUL MYSTERY," "VICTORIA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR LOVER.

"And yet this tough, impracticable heart
Is governed by a dainty fingered girl."—Rowe.

"There is a pleasure in being mad."
Which none but madmen know."—Dryden.

JUDGE LAWLESS was pacing up and down the floor of his study with rapid, excited strides, his brows knit, his face flushed, his hands clenched, his teeth set, his whole look, attitude, and bearing, speaking of deepest, intensest excitement. When in profound, or troubled thought, he had a habit (many have) of talking to himself unconsciously; and now he muttered, between his teeth:

"I am going mad—I am mad—bewitched—bewitched. To think that I, at my years, should fall in love like a boy of eighteen. I, who fancied I had outlived all such rubbish. But, oh, that girl that glorious girl that angel of beauty! that transcendently radiant creature! that lovely, bewildering, enchanting, intoxicating Erminie! Good heavens! how the very thought of her sets my head whirling! that electric Erminie! with her angel smile and irradiated face! Who could help loving her! Not I, certainly, and yet it is only one short week since her return home. Oh, that I could win her to love me! Oh, to possess that love-angel! Oh, Erminie! Er-

minie!" And breathing out his very soul in the syllables of her name, he sunk into a chair, and leaned his throbbing head on his hand.

Judge Lawless had all his life computed himself as a grave, self-possessed, dignified gentleman; excessively proud, excessively unbending, and so calm and unimpassioned that it seemed a matter of doubt whether he was made of common flesh and blood or cast-iron. But now, at the mature age of fifty-and-forty, all his pride and dignity blew away, like a whiff of down on a blast, at the first glimpse of Erminie Germaine's fair, sunny, blooming young face; and here he was, now, making a downright fool of himself—as many another old gentleman has done, is doing, and will continue to do, while the world goes round. Forgetting that he was nearly treble her age, forgetting his high position in the world and her lowly one, he was far more likely to be some day her father-in-law than her husband, forgetting everything, in a word, but that her beauty had turned his brain, Judge Lawless sat down to reflect on the best course to pursue in the present somewhat unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Judge Lawless was, as I told you, a grave, calm-pulsed gentleman, who considered himself as good, not to say considerably better, than any other man in the world, and held in the profoundest contempt the little corner of the world in which he lived, and its quiet, hum-drum inhabitants. Therefore, he heard Pet boisterously relating the arrival of Mr. and Miss Germaine with the greatest indifference, and without the remotest idea of ever giving either of them another thought beyond a cool caution to Pet not to associate too freely with people of "that set"; but when, next morning, riding past Old Barrens Cottage on his way to Judgetown, a vision met his eyes of such dazzling beauty that involuntarily he stood stock-still to gaze, Judge Lawless found that the only one in the world worth thinking of was one of "that set." There stood Erminie at the gate, in her trim, spotless muslin morning-dress, with her snowy linen collar and cuffs, looking as fresh, and pure, and fair, as the beautiful form they draped. The morning sunshine flashed in her shining, waving, thick, soft hair, gilded the roses on her cheeks, kindled a brighter light in the large, so full, and round lips. Judge Lawless was spell-bound, enchanted, bewildered, bedeviled, to use his own phrase. In all his life he had never seen so dazzling a beauty—in all his life he had never expected to see anyone half so lovely again; and there he stood, gazing upon her like a man in a dream, quite unconscious that the young lady, whoever she was, might think this prolonged stare very strange, to say the least of it. But she did not think it very strange at all. She recognized him, of course; and thinking he was merely trying to identify her, she pushed open the gate, and came out to him with a blush and a smile, and, being always a little awed and afraid of his stately grandeur, held out her hand to him with a girlish timidity quite charming.

"I suppose you have forgotten me, sir," she said, lifting the irresistible violet eyes to his face. "I am Erminie Germaine."

"Little Erminie! Why, how pret—a-I mean, how well you are looking!" he said, taking the hand she offered, and holding it a much longer time than was strictly necessary. "Who would ever think! Why don't you come over to Heath Hill some time, Miss Germaine?"

"I have promised Miss Lawless to go and spend the day with her soon," said Erminie, embarrassed by his too-ardent gaze, and striving to withdraw her hand. "I hope she is well?"

"Who? Eh? Oh, yea! she's well. Come over to-morrow, Miss Germaine. I shall be very glad to see you."

"I thank you, sir; I shall be most happy to do so," replied Erminie, growing more and more embarrassed by his open, admiring gaze, and again trying to withdraw her hand.

But the judge, quite unconsciously, held the little snow-flake fast, and seemed inclined to commit petty larceny by keeping it altogether, while he gazed and gazed in the sweet, blushing face, with its waving hair and drooping eyes, and felt desperately and more desperately in love every moment.

"Won't you come in, Judge Lawless?" said Erminie, at last, confused by her situation, fearing to offend him, yet wishing to get away.

"Come in? Oh, yes—to be sure!" exclaimed the judge, with alacrity. "I was just thinking—a—of going in to see your grandmother. I hope she is quite well."

And the judge, who had never entered the cottage before, nor dreamed in the most remote way of ever doing so, actually got off his horse, tied him to a stake, and followed the surprised Erminie into the house. And then, forgetting Ketura, and his business in Judgetown, and all other subnary things, in the presence of this enchanting maiden, there he remained for three mortal hours, until he unlooked-for entrance of Ray, who had been over the moor gunning, and now returned with a well-filled game-bag, looking happy, handsome, and with a powerful appetite. As his eye fell upon their strange guest, he started, colored slightly, and then bowed with cold hauteur. Judge Lawless returned it with one less stiff; for though in love with the sister, it by no means followed he was very passionately enamored of the brother. And then, discovering, to his horror, that the whole morning was gone, he rode off, followed by the haunting vision of a sweet young face, with waving, floating hair, and dark, lustrous, violet eyes.

And from that hour may be dated the "decline and fall" of Judge Lawless.

His business was given up for visits to the cottage; his family concerns were neglected for day-dreams that, however excusable in youths with faintly-sprouting mustaches, were quite absurd in a dark, dignified, "potent, grave, and reverend seigneur" like Judge Adolphus Lawless. But when love comes in at the door, sense flies out at the window, to change the adage a little, and especially where gentlemen on the disagreeable side of forty are concerned. So Judge Lawless was deaf, blind and dumb to that awful bugbear, "They say," and might have been seen at the cottage morning, noon, and night, to the utter amazement and complete astonishment of all who knew him, and to none more so than to his blue-eyed inflammation of the heart herself. Erminie was at a loss—completely at a loss, and so was Ray. Neither of them dreamed—no one dreamed—that the pompous, haughty Prince Grandison of a Judge Lawless could have fallen in love at all, much less with the little, obscure cottage-girl, Erminie Germaine—tainted, as she was, by that greatest of all crimes, poverty. Obscure, I said; let me retract that word. Erminie Germaine—beautiful Erminie—was known and celebrated far

beyond Old Barrens Cottage for her beauty, and goodness, and gentleness, and all the other qualities that make some women a little lower than the angels. But no one thought that on a heart of flint like his—or, rather, no heart at all—the Venus de Medicis herself, should she step out alive from her pedestal, could make the slightest impression; and therefore, though our Erminie was every bit as good-looking as that scantily-draped lady of whom the world raves, though she had grown to be another Helen for whom another Troy might have been lost, no one set his visits to the cottage down to her, but rather to eccentricity, to some scheme, to some inexplicable notion, to any thing at all but to the real cause.

And so Judge Lawless was in love, and unsuspected. And as he sat there in his library, with his head in his hand, thinking, and pondering, and revolving, and wondering, on the best method of bringing matters to a crisis, and astonishing his friends, his intention was to raise Miss Germaine to the dignity of his wife. Judge Lawless was severely moral; but how to propose—that was the trying hour of the dilemma. Judge Lawless was not accustomed to proposing; he had not attempted it for the last five-and-twenty years, and then the lady had saved him the trouble. Mrs. Lawless had been a wild young heiress, who fell violently in love with the "sweet" curling hair and "divine" whiskers of the handsome young lawyer, and not being troubled with that disagreeable disease incident to most very young ladies, except bashfulness, had, like a girl of honor, come to the point at once, and, in a very composed, upright, and downright way, tendered him her hand and fortune. The ambitious young lawyer, nothing loth, took her at her word, and, one fine moonlight night, a fourth-story window was opened, a rope-ladder put in requisition; then a carriage; then a parson; then a ring; and "Adolphus Lawless, barrister at law," as his shingle then announced him, was wooed and won.

But this was quite another thing. He was in love now, which he hadn't been the first time; and love makes the boldest warrior that ever clove helmets and heads in battle as timid as a—I was going to say girl; but I won't, for in such a case, they are not timid at all—but as a newly-fledged gosling. Not that he feared a refusal. Judge Lawless drew himself up until his pantaloons cracked, and looked indignantly in the glass at himself for entertaining such an idea as that. But he didn't know the formula—that was it. Things had changed so since he was a parson, and the manner of popping the question might have changed with the rest. It would never do to make himself ridiculous; though, as the thought crossed his mind, he drew himself up again to the full extent of his six feet, odd inches, and felt indignant at the notion of his being ridiculous under any circumstances whatever.

"Have her I must, come what will!" he said, getting up again, and resuming his 2:40 pace up and down the floor. "I am mad about that girl, I believe. The world may laugh and sneer at the idea of my marrying a—well, a pauper, in point of fact, when I could win, if I chose, the highest in the land. Well, let them. If Judge Lawless cannot do as he pleases, I should like to know who can. I have wealth enough to do as both; the old admiral will leave his estate and bank-stock to Ranty and Pet, and h'm-m-m, ah!—Yes, have her must—that's settled. And this very afternoon shall I ride over, and let her know the honor in store for her!"

And that very afternoon, true to his promise, Judge Lawless, arrayed in a somber, dignified suit of black, with his hair and whiskers oiled and scented to that extent that his fast mare, Wildfire, lifted up her head and looked at him in grave astonishment, and inwardly resolved to keep a wary eye on her master for the future, lest he should take to dandyism in his old age, made his way to Old Barrens Cottage.

Arriving at the cottage he fastened his mare, and rapped at the cottage door with his riding-whip, in a grand and important sort of way befitting the occasion. Erminie herself opened it; and, at sight of her beautiful, rounded form, the taper waist, the swelling bust, the white, rounded throat, on which the graceful little head was poised with the queenly air of a royal princess; the waving, sunshiny hair, the smiling lips, the soft, tender, violet eyes, Judge Lawless was twice, and thrice, as deeply, and irrevocably, and desperately in love as ever.

He came in. Erminie was alone. How he thanked the gods for that! took a seat, stood his case in the corner, laid his hat on the table, drew out a snowy cambric handkerchief, redolent of musk, eau de cologne, otto of roses, and bergamot, and hid one of those intensely mysterious pockets, where, for some inscrutable reason, were in their coat-tails, blew his nose, replaced his handkerchief, laid a hand on each knee, looked at Erminie, and prepared her for what was coming by a loud "ahem!"

Erminie, whose rosy fingers were flying, as if by stress, on some article of dress, did not look up; so all these significant preparations, proper to be done, and which are always done, I believe, whenever elderly men go to propose, were quite thrown away upon her.

"Ahem!" repeated the judge, with some severity, and yet looking with longing eyes at the graceful form and sweet, drooping face before him. "Miss Erminie!"

She looked up inquiringly, with a smile. "Ahem!" The stately judge was rather embarrassed. Perhaps, Miss Germaine, you are not in utter ignorance of them—of the object of my visits here. I have revolved the matter over in all its bearings, and have come to the conclusion that—ahem!—that I am at perfect liberty to please myself in this matter. The world may wonder—no doubt it will; but I trust I have wisdom enough to direct my own actions; and though it may stare, it cannot but admire the person I—ahem!—I have chosen!"

The judge made a dead halt, drew out his handkerchief again, until the air would have reminded you of "Ceylon's spicy breezes," and shifted his left leg over his right, and then his right one over his left. Erminie, not understanding one word of this vocabulary, had dropped her work, and sat looking at him, with wide-open eyes.

In short, therefore, Miss Germaine, we will, if you please, consider the matter settled; and you will greatly oblige me by naming the earliest possible day for the ceremony.

"The ceremony! What ceremony, sir?" said the puzzled Erminie, looking prettier than ever in her perplexity.

"Our marriage, to be sure!"

"Certainly, my love. The earlier the day, the sooner my happiness will be complete!"

And the judge raised her hand to his lips, with the stately formality of five-and-twenty years before, fearing to venture any further; for there was a look in the sweet, wondering eyes that made him rather uneasy.

"Judge Lawless, excuse me. I do not know what you mean. I fear I have misunderstood you," said Erminie, more perplexed than she ever was before in the whole course of her life.

"Misunderstood me? Impossible, Miss Germaine! I have used the plainest possible language, I think, in asking you to be my wife?"

"Your wife?"

"Yes, my wife! Why this surprise, dear girl? Why, Erminie! Good heavens, Erminie! Is it possible you really have not understood me all this time? Why, dearest, fairest girl, I love you—I wish you to be my wife! Do you understand now?"

He would have passed his arm around her waist; but, crimson with burning blushes, she sprang to her feet, a vivid light in her beautiful eyes, and raised her hand to wave him off.

"You are mocking me, Judge Lawless! If you have had your amusement, we will drop the subject."

"Mocking you, my beautiful Erminie! I swear to you I love you with all my heart and soul. Only make me happy, by saying you will be my wife!"

The conviction that he was really serious, now for the first time dawned upon Erminie's mind. The rosy tide flooded neck and brow again, and she dropped her flushed face in her hands, as she remembered he was Ranty's father.

"I am not surprised that you should wonder at my choice," said the judge, complacently. "Of course the world expects I should marry a woman of rank; but I like you, and am determined to please myself, let them wonder as they will!"

Erminie's hands, dropped from her face, crimson now, but not with embarrassment; her eyes flashed with the fiery spirit of the old De Courcys, as she drew herself up to her full height, and calmly said:

"I will spare you the humiliation, and your friends the trouble of wondering at your choice. For the honor you have done me, I thank you, even while I must decline it."

"Decline it?" The judge stammered. Erminie compressed her lips, and silently bowed. She stood there like a young queen, her proud little head erect, her fair cheeks scarlet, her eyes darkening and darkening, until they seemed almost black.

"Decline it?" The judge, in his amazement, was at a loss to see.

"Yes, sir."

"Miss Germaine, I—I'm thunderstruck! I—I'm confounded! I—I am utterly confounded! Miss Germaine, you do not mean it; you cannot mean it! It's impossible you can mean it! Refuse me! Oh, it is utterly impossible you can mean it!"

"On the contrary, wonderful as it seems, I must distinctly and unequivocally decline the honor," said Erminie, looking at calm determination showed her resolution was not to be shaken. Judge Lawless rose to his feet and confronted her. Indignation, humiliation, anger, wounded pride, mortification, jealousy, and a dozen other disagreeable feelings, flushing his face until his reflection fairly imparted a rosy hue to his snow-white shirt-bosom.

"Miss Germaine, am I to understand that you refuse to marry me?"

"Decidedly, sir."

"May I ask your reason for this refusal, Miss Germaine?"

"I recognize no right by which you are privileged to question me, Judge Lawless, but because of the respect I owe one so much my senior, even if I did, I would not love you; who looks upon me as so far beneath him; and third—"

She paused, caught his eye fixed upon her, and colored more vividly than before.

"Well, Miss Germaine, and third," he said, sarcastically.

"I will answer no more such questions, Judge Lawless," she said, with proud indignation; "and I repeat it once again; I cannot be your wife."

"That remains to be seen, Miss Germaine. There are more ways than one of winning a lady; I have tried one, and failed; now I shall have recourse to another."

"Judge Lawless, is that meant as a threat?" said Erminie, her proud De Courcy blood flushing in her cheeks and lighting up her eyes again.

He smiled slightly, but made no other reply, as he took his hat and cane and prepared to go.

"The darkening, streaming light of the violet eyes fixed full upon him was his only answer, as she stood drawn up to her full height.

"Good morning, then," he said, with a courteous smile. "I do not despair, even yet. Time works wonders, you know, Miss Germaine. Give my best regards to your excellent grandmother." And with a stately bow, a la Grandison, the judge left the cottage, and the light of the dark, indignant, beautiful eyes.

But once on his horse, and galloping like mad over the beach, a change wonderful to see came over the bland face of the judge. Darker and darker it grew, thicker and thicker was his scowl, angrier and angrier became his eyes, until his face looked like a human thunder-cloud.

"The proud, conceited, impertinent minx!" he burst out, to refuse me—me—me, Judge Lawless. Why, she must be mad! By heaven! she shall be mine yet, if only to teach her a lesson. Black Bart is in Judestown. I saw him yesterday; and he, with his fellow-smugglers, or pirates, or freebooters, or whatever they are, shall aid me in this. It does not sound well, to be sure, for a judge of the land to tacitly favor smuggling, but then those contraband wines and brandies would tempt St. Peter himself. They shall do a different kind of smuggling for me this time. In the Hidden Cave Madame Erminie will be safe enough, and that queen of the smugglers, or whatever she is, can take care of her. Refuse me! by the hosts above, that girl shall repent her temerity! This very day I will see Black Bart, and then—"

He compressed his lips tight, and his face assumed a look of dark, grim determination, that showed his resolution was unalterable.

And meanwhile Erminie, with her fair face bowed in her hands, was weeping the bitterest tears she had ever shed in her life.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. TOOSPEGS IN DISTRESS AGAIN.

The time I've lost in wooing.

In watching and pursuing.

The light that lies in woman's eyes.

Has been my heart's undoing.

Though wisdom oft has sought me;

I scorned the love she brought me;

My only love was woman's love.

And folly's all they've taught me—Moore.

ADMIRAL HARRY HAVENFUL sat alone in the parlor of the White Squall, the heels of his boots elevated on the knobs of the andirons, his chair tipped back to that sublime

angle which women admire, but men only understand. A long meerschaum, with an amber mouth-piece, protruded from his lips, while whiffs of blue, vapory smoke curled from the corner of his mouth; his hands stuck in his trousers pockets, and his eyes fixed admiringly on the pink and yellow ship-of-war on the mantel. Admiral Harry Havenful was enjoying life hugely on a small scale, when a dispirited knock, such as moneyless debtors give, was heard at the outer door.

"Tumble up, below there! tumble up, ahoy-y-y!" roared the admiral, taking the pipe from his mouth to summon the servants.

In compliance with this sphyri-like request, one of the darkeys "tumbled up," accordingly, and on opening the door, Mr. O. C. Toospegs stalked in, and with the head of his cane in his mouth, entered the parlor and presented himself to the jolly little admiral.

"D'ye do, Orlando? Give us your flipper," said the admiral, protruding one huge hand without rising, or even turning his head, merely casting a glance over his shoulder, and smoking on as placidly as before.

"In very well—that is, I ain't very well at all, Admiral Havenful, I'm very much obliged to you," said Mr. Toospegs, grasping the huge hand and wringing it faintly a second or two. "My health ain't so good as it might be, and I don't expect it ever will be again, but I'm resigned to that and every thing else that may happen. It's nasty to be always complaining, you know, Admiral Havenful."

"That's so," growled the Admiral, in a tone so deeply bass that it was quite startling.

"Therefore, Admiral Havenful, though I ain't so well as I might be, I'm very well indeed, I'm very much obliged to you. It must be nice to die and have no more bother—don't you think so, Admiral Havenful?" said Mr. Toospegs, with a groan so deep that the admiral took his pipe from his mouth and stared at him.

"What now?" grunted the admiral, who foresaw something coming; "heave to!"

"Admiral Havenful, would you be so good as not to say that? You mean well, I know, but you can't imagine the unpleasant sensations it causes—ugh!" said Mr. Toospegs, with a wry face and a shudder. "You never were sea-sick, were you, Admiral Havenful?"

If you were, you don't require to be told the pang that hearing that inflicts upon me. Therefore, please don't say it again; for it gives me the most peculiar sensations that ever was."

The admiral grunted, and began smoking away like an ill-repaired chimney. Mr. Toospegs sat uneasily on the edge of his chair, and continued to make a light and rather unsatisfactory repeat off the head of his cane. Thus a mournful silence was continued for some fifteen or twenty minutes, and then the admiral took his pipe from his mouth, wiped it on the cuff of his sleeve, and without looking at Mr. Toospegs, drew a long, placid breath, and held it out toward him with a laconic:

"Smoke!"

"Thankee, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, mournfully, "I never do."

"More fool you, then," said the admiral, gruffly, putting it in his own mouth again.

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, in a large tone of voice, "I'm aware that I ain't so wise as some of my friends could wish me; but, at the same time, let me assure you that I don't consider it a proof of wisdom to smoke at all. Smokers mean real well, I know, but it's unpleasant to others, besides setting the air in a dingy state, blacking the teeth, adulterating the breath, and often producing spontaneous combustion. Which means, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, elevating his cane to "make the explanation, 'getting worked up to a high degree of steam, and going off quite unexpected and promiscuous, some day, with a bang, and leaving nothing behind to tell the melancholy tale but a pinch of ashes, and that—"

"Oh, bother!" cut in the admiral, impatiently. "Belay your jawing tackle, young man, and let somebody else have sea-room. What port do you hail from last?"

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, in no way offended at this cavalier mode of treating his digression on the evils of smoking, "if you mean by that where I was all morning, I've just come from Dismal Hollow. Aunt Priscilla wasn't in—well, she wasn't in very good spirits—and so I got out of the back door and came away. I was going to Old Barrens Cottage, only I saw Judge Lawless' horse before the door, and so I came here."

"Always welcome, Orlando, boy—always welcome," said the admiral, briskly. "But hold on a minute! What the dickens brings that stiff brood of a brother-in-law of mine so often to that cottage? Eh, Orlando?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs. "It's real singular, too; because he never used to go there at all, and now his horse is at the door every day."

"So's yours, for that matter. Hey, Orlando?"

Mr. Toospegs blushed to the very roots of his hair, and shifted his feet uneasily over the floor, as though it burnt them.

"Orlando," said the admiral—holding his pipe between his finger and thumb, and regarding significantly these emotions—"Orlando, I see breakers ahead!"

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, in a tone of mingled uneasiness and anguish, "I dare say you do; but, my gracious! don't keep looking at a fellow so! I couldn't help it, you know; and I know it's all my own fault to be miserable for life. I don't blame anybody at all, and I rather like being miserable for life than otherwise. I know you mean well, but I'd rather you wouldn't keep looking at me so. I'm very much obliged to you."

"Orlando," solemnly began the admiral, without removing his eyes from the other's face, "you're steering out of your course altogether. Come to anchor! Now, then, what's to pay?"

The unexpected energy with which this last question was asked had such an effect on the nerves of Mr. O. C. Toospegs, that he gave a sudden jump, suggestive of sitting down on an upturned pin cushion, and grasped his stick in wild alarm.

"Now, Orlando," repeated the admiral, with a wave of his pipe—"now, Orlando, the question is, what's to pay?"

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, in terror, "there ain't nothing to pay; I don't owe a cent in the world, s'elp me Bob! I don't owe a single blamed brass farthing to a child unborn."

"Bah!" said the admiral, with a look of intense disgust at his obtuseness. "I didn't mean that. I want to know what's up, where the wind sits; what you keep cruising off and on that cottage for all the time. Now, then, hold hard!"

"It's my intention to hold hard, Admiral Havenful," replied Mr. Toospegs, blushing like a beet-root. "But I'd rather not mention what takes me there, if it's all the same to you. It's a secret, locked deep in the unfathomable

recesses of this here bosom; and I never mean to reveal it to anybody till I'm a melancholy corpse in the skies. You'll excuse me, Admiral Havenful; a fellow can't always restrain his tears, you know; and I feel so miserable, thank you, of late, that it's a consolation even to cry," said Mr. Toospegs, wiping his eye.

"Now, Orlando, you just hold on a minute—will you?" said the admiral, facing briskly round, with much the same air as an unfeeling dentist who determines to have your tooth whether you will or not; "now, look here, and let's do things ship-shape. Has our Firely got anything to do with it?"

"Admiral Havenful, I'm happy to say she has not. I felt pretty badly about Miss Pet, there, one time; but I have got nicely over that. It wasn't near so dangerous as I expected it would be; but this—this is. The way I feel sometimes, Admiral Havenful, is awful to contemplate. I can't sleep nor eat, and I don't take no pleasure even in my new pantaloons with the blue stripes down the side. I often lie awake nights crying now, and I wish I had never been born! I do wish it!"

"Where's the good of it, if a fellow's going to be made miserable this way, I want to know?"

"Orlando Toospegs," said the admiral, rising, sternly, "just look here, will you? I'm not going to stand this sort of talk, you know this flying in the face of Providence"—here the admiral raised his glazed hat, and looked reverently at a blue bottle on the ceiling—

"because it's not proper nor ship-shape, no how you can fix it. Now, Orlando, I've advised you time and again—I've been a father to you before you was the size of a tar-bucket. I've turned you up and spanked you when you wasn't big as a well-grown marlin-spoke, and I've often given you a good kicking when you were older, for your shortcomings; I've talked to you, Orlando Toospegs, for your good till all was blue—I've made myself as hoarse as a boatswain splashing showers of good advice on you; and now what's my return? You say you don't see no use in being born. Orlando, it grieves me—it makes me feel as bad as if I had drank a pail of filge-water; but there is no help for it! I give you up to ruin—I've lost all faith in human morals—I wash my hands of you altogether!"

Here the admiral looked around for some water to literally fulfill his threat; but, seeing none, he wiped his hands on the table cloth, and resumed his seat with the air a Spartan father may be supposed to have worn when condemning his own son to death.

So deeply affected was Mr. Toospegs by this pathetic exhortation that he sobbed away like a hyena in his flaring bandanna, with a great noise and much wiping of eyes and nose, which showed he was not lost to all sense of human feeling.

"Yes, Orlando," said the admiral, mournfully, "I repeat it, I'm determined to wash my hands of you. The basin ain't here; but it's no matter. Your father was a nice man, and I'm sorry his son ever came to this."

"Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, hiccupping violently, "I'm ashamed of myself. I oughtn't to have said it, and I won't do so no more at any price. I know—I know I oughtn't mind being wretched; but somehow I do, and I can't help it. If you'll only forgive me, and not wash your hands of me, I'll tell you what's the matter, and promise to try and do better for the time to come."

"Well, heave ahead!" said the somewhat mollified mariner.

"Admiral Havenful!" exclaimed Mr. Toospegs, springing to his feet with such startling energy that the old sailor jumped up, too, and brandished his pipe, expecting a violent personal assault and battery—"will you be good enough not to say that? Oh, my gracious!"

exclaimed Mr. Toospegs, in a wildly-distracted tone, "if it ain't too darned bad. Ugh!"

And with a violent shudder and a sea-green visage, the unhappy young man sat down, with one hand on his mouth and the other on his diaphragm.

With a violent snort of unspeakable contempt, the admiral flung himself back in his chair, and turned up his Roman nose to the highest possible angle of scorn.

"Excuse me, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, at length, in a fainting voice, "I feel better, now. It was so—so sudden, and took me so unexpected, that—that it rather startled me; but I'm quite well, now. I'm very much obliged to you, Ugh! The very mention of—you know, what follows sea-sickness—turns my very skin to goose-flesh. We won't speak of it any more, if it's all the same to you, Admiral Havenful. I promised to tell you the cause of my misery—didn't I? Yes! Well, it's—it's Miss Minnie."

"Little Snowflake! hea—I mean go ahead."

"I went and fell in love with her, Admiral Havenful," said Mr. Toospegs, looking around blushing.

"Stand under!" growled the bewildered admiral.

"Admiral Havenful, it's my intention to stand from under as much as possible. I'm very much obliged to you," said Mr. Toospegs, politely.

"I dare say you're surprised to hear it, but I really couldn't help it. I assure you she was so—so—stunning, so—so—I don't know what to call it; but it's enough to turn a fellow crazy, by granny! I know she don't care a pin for me. I know she don't, and nobody can tell the state it throws me into. I thought I felt dreadfully about Miss Pet's black eyes, and I did, too; but it ain't no circumstance to the state Miss Minnie's blue ones pitches me into. Admiral Havenful, I don't expect you've ever been in love, but it's the most awful state to be in ever was. It makes you feel worse than sitting down into a wasp's nest—it really does. In fact, I don't know anything, except, perhaps, sea-sickness, that's equal to it in unpleasantness."

So completely unexpected was this declaration, that the admiral so far forgot himself as to look appealingly at his pipe and growl out, "Heave ahead!"

The effect of this command on Mr. Toospegs, in his present disordered state of mind, was perfectly electrifying. Springing to his feet, he seized his hat and cane, clasped his bandanna to his mouth, and, with a look of intense anguish no pen can describe, made a rush from the door, fled from the house, and vanished for the remainder of that day from mortal eye.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 290.)

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THE ONSET OF THE NORTH-WIND.

BY HENRI MONTCAUL.

Blew the north-wind a ringing blast!
Down from their lofty fastnesses
That guard the shores of the Polar seas,
Gathered his vassals thick and fast.

By rapid marches and forced advance
South and southward he made his way,
Piercing and cruel and swift to slay
With glittering halberd and pointed lance.

His loitering rear-guard, looking back,
Grimly smiled, rejoiced to see
The perished fragments of flower and tree
Scattered along the terrible track.

And where he saw, as he hurried past,
The covering fields lay bare and brown,
He sent his hurrying snow-storms down
To shut them close and hold them fast.

And all the short November days
He hurried along in terrible might;
And through each long December night
Still marches on, nor his onset stays.

Till at last he posts his sentinels wary,
Throws up his drifts for a quick defense,
And pitches his camp of snowy tents
On the helpless fields of January.

And so we sit in leaguered state;
Sit and muse by the open fire,
And pile the blazing back-log higher,
Waiting long, but content to wait.

Since we know full well a time will come
When out of the south triumphant spring,
With flower-banners fluttering,
Will march to drive the usurper home.

And the welcome south-wind, coming then,
Shall put to flight the frost and snow,
Warm with its kiss the brook's cold flow,
And wake all nature to a whisper low.

"The beautiful spring-time is come again."

John's Christmas.

BY FREDERICK DEWEY.

STURDY John Duncan walked into his little cottage one morning very sore at heart. And no wonder: times had been hard with him ever since he had been married, nearly a year since. When he led the prettiest and most tender-hearted girl in Mayhew to the altar he was in the receipt of a good salary in the shop of the principal dealer in the town.

It was quite sufficient to get married on, people said; and Minnie would save a trifle, too. But the dealer proved to be a villain, and plunging heavily into useless debt, suddenly absconded, throwing John, three months after marriage, out of employment. Since then he had been working, now and then, on the neighboring farms and about the village. But in the latter he had no hopes of making a living—it was the dullest, small-plodding town in the State.

What he earned went as fast as it came, and now winter had superseded autumn, and he was in debt, and his pocket was literally empty. So as he entered his little house this wintry morning he felt discouraged and moody, and no wonder.

Pretty Minnie greeted him with a sweet smile, as bright and cheery as ever, though she instantly noted his despondency.

"Well, John?"

"Nothing, as usual," he replied, gloomily. "No one needs any help. Great heavens! why did I drag you down to poverty and drudgery—you, the prettiest and most tenderly-reared girl in Mayhew! If I had only stood by my vow and had not married until I had something ahead this would not have been."

She ran to him, and, perching on his knee, kissed him tenderly.

"I should think you would be ashamed of yourself!" she declared, with a charming attempt at severity. "To think that you, a great, strong, good-for-nothing, dear old fellow, should be grumbling and brooding while I am satisfied. For my part, I wouldn't change places with the richest wife in the world." And she kissed him again.

Oh, the magical effect of a wife's pure love. He pressed her to his breast in silence, fairly idolizing her. He thought, then, that however poor in worldly goods he might be; that however wasted in health or sickness, he had a jewel far above price—the pure love of a gentle, patient wife.

They sat together for some time, then the cloud returned to John's brow.

"Minnie," he said, gloomily, "what makes me feel so this morning is that Christmas is at hand, only two days off, and we haven't anything good for dinner!"

"Oh, never mind that, John. I am sure I can do without for once."

"But I can't! I have always been used to a Christmas dinner, and if I go without day after to-morrow it will be for the first time."

In her secret heart Minnie might have said the same, but in her features nothing was visible save a cheery, loving smile.

"I am almost discouraged!" he said, watching the hopeful face close to his. "If I was alone it would be difficult."

"Hush!" she said, softly. "Think of what you are making, and be hopeful."

She blushed eloquently, and pointed to a corner of the small, bare room. A half-finished cradle, roughly constructed, stood by the wall. It was John's handiwork.

A tear stood in his eyes. He put her gently aside and strode toward the door. Stopping with his hand on the latch, he heartily said:

"Minnie, if there is any way in which I can make Christmas, at least, a cheerful day, I will try it. Good-by, my sweetheart."

The door closed quickly, and he was gone. Minnie went to the closet and took from some hidden cranny some gay cloth, and then sat down sewing, with a smile toward the cradle; she was preparing for its completion.

John stood for a moment undecided, then strode away toward a large white house on a distant hill. He had heard there had been a change of occupants and that a wealthy old gentleman now resided there. Though still downcast, he hoped to find work there and walked rapidly on. He calculated his prospects in his mind, as he walked, and, like every one else, took a sort of woe-begone pleasure in dwelling on his misfortunes.

"I owe the grocer twenty dollars; the butcher ten. (I wonder how long it is since we had fresh meat). And there is the clothing I got for Minnie, (God bless her!) twelve more. And the three months' rent at fifteen dollars—oh, dear! I wish I had a job!"

He was now close to the house when he heard a subdued loving close by. He halted and listened. It seemed quite close, yet there was nothing in sight. Determining it was some animal in distress he proceeded toward the sound. After going some distance the sound appeared to change its locality, for it seemed to come from behind him. Turning, he walked back, and when he came to the spot where he first heard it, it appeared to come from a shed close by.

John was puzzled, and was inclined to think some mischievous urchin was deceiving him. He was on the point of continuing his walk when the sound once more came to his hearing. This time it was loud and round and certainly came from the vicinity of the shed.

He walked toward it. The sound became more distinct as he approached, and was certainly the low of a bovine. A few steps past the shed brought him to the cause of the noise.

He was standing on the brink of a partially filled-up well. In its flourishing days it had been nothing more than an ordinary "wallow," as being in a marsh water was found at an insignificant depth. Now, a few days before a slight rain had fallen, followed by sleet, which froze quickly afterward. When it was raining considerable water trickled down the sides of the well, and when frozen, made them very slippery.

In the bottom of this hole was a cow unable to get out, moaning mournfully. He remembered her as having belonged to the former owners of the farm, and probably she had been purchased by the successor.

Once sleek and plump, she was now lank and lean, and her ribs protruded plainly; she had evidently been there, and without food, for several days. Probably the water at the bottom, (now skimmed by a slight ice) had drawn her thither and she had been unable to extricate herself from her unpleasant predicament. Her eyes fixed themselves on John with a pleading, and at the same time, a languishing expression, which, under other circumstances, would have been ludicrous.

John instantly comprehended the situation, and his ready wit immediately conceived a plan by which the hapless animal could be relieved. He went to the shed, and as he expected, found a sufficiency of detached and loose mould under its sheltering roof. A short board lay at hand. This he loaded with the soil, and, going to the hole, scattered it down the side. This operation he repeated until he was satisfied. Then he stood on the other side of the hole and drove the cow up his path, which she ascended easily. She was overjoyed at her release, and with a demonstrative belloy of mingled thanks and joy, she careered away.

"What are you doing, sir? I would like to know, sir! yes, sir!" came in a quavering, piping voice, from the shed.

John turned and beheld a tall, spare gentleman, with a superabundance of furs and wrappers, standing close by, watching him curiously. He was aged and rather cross, John thought, on a cold morning. He was the new owner of the farm. He resolved to conciliate him if possible.

"One of your cows, sir, got into that hole and couldn't get out again, so I helped her."

"You did, eh? and did you know, were you aware, that she belongs to me?"

"I supposed she did, sir."

"And suppose I put her in there, sir! what right had you to take her out, sir?"

"I do not think you put her in there."

"Why don't you?" (curiously).

"Because you don't look like a man that would cause even a beast to undergo misery."

"Young man, what is your name?"

"John Duncan."

"Oh! so you are young Duncan. You are pretty poor, ain't you?"

John's face flushed, and he glared at the old gentleman.

"Come, come! I beg your pardon, young man. I am an old ruffian," and he laid his hand kindly on John's arm. The austere expression gave place to a kindly, sympathizing one, and the younger man's passion vanished.

"Yes, I am poor—very poor. And, sir, I've got a little wife at home whom I care for. To-day is the 23d, and I haven't a penny to get her a tit-bit for a Christmas dinner. If you could give me a job—"

"Lord bless my soul!" hastily interrupted the old gentleman. "Yes, yes; I know all about it. Often heard of you—very deserving young person—was just a-going to your house after you—kind-hearted chap to help a dumb beast. Yes, yes; come on!"

He hobbled away toward his residence, continually commanding John to follow him, and indulging in a variety of strange and disjointed sentences, among which frequently occurred the mention of his kindness to a dumb beast. Past the stately, comfortable residence he hurried, never deviating a jot from his course. Through the maze of wicker fences which guarded the lawn and garden; dodging through the occupants of the barnyard, and into the plethoric barn. Here he stopped short, and taking a pitchfork from a corner handed it to John.

"There's hay—plenty of it," he piped, pointing to the immense bay overhead. "Pitch it! toss it! tumble it!"

"But where?" asked John.

"Anywhere! don't make any difference—pay you two-fifty a day."

He was pegging away, rubbing his hands excitedly, when John caught his arm, with face red and glowing. Charity stood too conspicuous in the old gentleman's act, and he was very proud.

"No you don't!" he said, almost roughly. "I'm not a beggar, sir, I would have you understand!"

The other looked at him helplessly, for a moment, then hobbled away, bidding him remain. Into the house he went, into the kitchen, and up to his tender-hearted old wife.

"I say!" he said, "I'm in a fix."

"You always are," she answered, with an affectionate glance.

"But this is a fix. I've got a young man out here—honest—helped old cow out of a hole—poor and awful proud—nice, pretty wife; and folks say there'll soon be three in the family—wants to get a Christmas dinner for her—ain't got any money."

"Well, give him something to do, then!"

"Did! Told him to pitch hay, and he got mad and wanted to fight."

"Got mad and wanted to fight because you told him to pitch hay?"

"No, no! only got vexed—proud, you see. Knew I was giving him a useless job."

"No wonder he got vexed; I like him for it. Go quickly, before he goes away, and set him to mending fences."

The old gentleman hobbled back and found John, with a red face, idly picking straws to pieces. He went to work with a will now he was doing something useful, and began to whistle. The old gentleman took some grain and salt down to the unfortunate cow, and coming back, met a lad who worked on the farm, going to tell Minnie of John's engagement.

"The bright little woman was glad for his sake; and, putting up a dinner, started off for the farm."

The old gentleman, on looking out of the window at noon, saw them eating together. He shouted for the lad.

"Joe! go right out there and bring 'em in! Lord bless my soul! only a bit of corn bread and two cold potatoes for a winter's day, and eating out in the cold, too. Bring 'em in."

They came in, and then all sat down to a bounteous dinner, smoking hot. It was like old times to the young couple, but they had not tasted the like for many days. John told of his struggles to earn a living, and the old

couple listened attentively. When they arose from dinner the old gentleman said:

"Young man, when I met you this morning I was on my way to demand my rent, for I own your house now. I was crusty and sour, and might have treated you harshly. I never could have done it in the world. But when I saw you maneuver about the poor beast I saw you were smart and kind-hearted. Now, do you know what I've got?"

They eyed him askance.

"I have got the biggest farm in the State. I am a mighty rich man. Now, I want a bookkeeper and a supervisor. You'll do to a charm. I'll give you one hundred a month and expenses—if I don't I am a ruffian. I want you to go to work right after Christmas, and I'll pay your first month's salary in advance—right here, this minute." He pulled out his huge pocket-book and handed bills and coin to John.

"There, there, now," whispered the good wife, drawing Minnie to her. "Don't take on so—you mustn't; there's a dear."

She was sobbing for joy. The good dame cried, too. The old gentleman blew his nose violently, and sharply scolded Joe for putting such green wood on the fire. It was enough to ruin younger eyes than his, he declared, with his back to the rest.

After supper that night, John finished the cradle. Then he took his wife in his arms, and clasped her long and lovingly. She wept on his shoulder.

"When the little one lies here," he said, softly, tapping the cradle, "we need not pinch and toil so hard, my darling. We will be comfortable then. God bless the old gentleman!"

"God bless them both; and you, too, my tender-hearted John."

DAWN OF DAY.

BY L. C. GREENWOOD.

The gray shadows that o'er earth in brooding lay
Refreshed by the silent night, and covering
With freshness all below, are hovering
Before their vanishing at the dawn of day.

The trembling dewdrops on every flower and tree
Are made translucent with the opal hue
Of the sunbeams that pierce the shadows
Awakening each bird and honey-seeking bee.

The sky with rosy smile serenely bending
Above the stretching landscape's magic view;
Such as on canvas artist never drew—
With golden light through trembling haze descend-
ing.

The half-closed flowers like eyes entranced in
sleeping,
Are slowly opening to Aurora's tinted light.
Drinking the dew-drops as they sleep of night—
Oh, that the day may end in rich completeness,
Which now is dawning on this world for all.
And the duties that to each one may fall
Be done so perfect, adding to life's sweetness.

May our lives be blended with a purity
That shall at resurrection's glorious morn
The shrouding shadows from this life are torn.
On us shall dawn Heaven's bright futurity.

Vials of Wrath:

THE GRAVE BETWEEN THEM.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL.

AUTHOR OF "TWO GIRLS' LIVES," "LOVE-
BLIND," "OATH BOUND," "BARBARA'S
FATE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XX.

THE cold summer afternoon was nearly over, and already fresh, lifeless breezes were blowing refreshingly, even in New York, where the day had been remarkably pleasant and invigorating. Up in Harlem the little children, freshly bathed and dressed in their white, cool suits, were playing in the different door-yards, and Ethel Havelstock, her own pleasant duties completed, and herself dressed in a newly-laundried blue lawn, stood in the side bay-window of her house, watching the frolic of the children, and laughing with them, in the fullness of the joy in her heart.

She looked so passing fair in her sweet, half-bridal-like, half-matronly dignity, her pale, refined face lighted with such beaming radiance, her dark, glowing eyes wearing a perfect happiness in their brave, proud glances.

Everything was so pleasant to her; her charming little home, over which she presided with a quiet grace that could not have been equaled by a duchess in her castle. Frank had been so lavish of all the little dainties and luxuries that suited her fine nature so well; and as she looked around her little parlor, as neat as hands could render it, and bearing in every detail, from the position of the gay Persian ottomans, to the hanging-baskets between the gracefully-draped lace curtains, the impress of a woman's artistic touch, Ethel's heart gave great bounds of rapturous delight as she thought Frank had done it all—Frank, her lover, her husband, her lord and master.

This afternoon she was expecting a letter, without doubt. Her husband had been at Tanglewood a week, and although he had sent no word as yet, Ethel had found a thousand excuses for his tardiness. Until to-day: just a week from the day of his departure, when she certainly did look for her letter.

The thought had had but gossamer wings to the hours of that bright sunny day. She had risen early and taken her customary walk before she prepared her lonely, tasty breakfast; after which she had put her house in exquisite order, and then sat down to her music for a long practice.

There were many new songs—Danks', Millard's, and others, that Frank seemed to have ordered with an especial admiration for the subject discussed in them all—love; and Ethel sung them in her sweet, pure voice, with an earnestness that made her cheeks glow.

As yet, she had not allowed herself to be lonesome, and not once had she permitted herself to recall the reproach she had felt the day her husband had gone away, leaving her at home.

She was very happy, because of perfect trust and content, and in her trust and content she stood in the lace-draped bay window watching the little children at play, and waiting for the approach of the letter-carrier, whose gray uniform was already distinguishable a block off, as, with his satchel slung over his shoulder, and a pile of letters in his hand, he called at house after house, hearing her at every call. She was very impatient, in her own daily way, that she manifested by quick tapping of her slippered foot, and by the light and eagerness that leaped to her wistful eyes. It seemed he would never reach her door—and she in such delicious unrest to get the letter from his hands that little knew the preciousness of the burden they carried so carelessly.

It was her first love-letter—this doubly-dear missive from her lover-husband; it would be so full of affectionate utterances and assurances of faith and loyalty that would brighten the afternoon as if an electric light had suddenly come into a dark place.

Her silent, loving theories had absorbed her for one little moment of time; then, she looked up, certainly expecting to see the post-man with hand extended, bearing precious freight.

Instead—she started with a thrill of positive physical pain as she saw, with eyes that almost refused to believe, that he had passed her house, and was already in the next side-yard handing a yellow-enveloped missive to a burly, blushing Irish cook, who, like dainty Ethel, had been waiting.

She turned from the window, a sick pain at her heart, her lips quivering, her eyes filling with tears, and sat down, almost wearily, in her sewing-chair, and took up a garment she was making.

She was so disappointed, and as she told herself, half-indignantly, over such a trifle as failing to receive a letter by a certain delivery, when there were two a day, too.

Frank had written, in all probability, and perhaps missed the first mail after, so that the next would bring it with more assured certainty. Ethel determined to wait patiently until the morning mail, and then wondered why she did not resume her wonted quiet happiness of feeling, as she sat and sewed; wondered that so small a disappointment had power to weigh her spirits down, as they certainly were bowed.

She didn't know it was not the fulfilling of her fond expectations that depressed her; she had no idea that her sadness arose from the foreshadowing of an inevitable fate whose first gloom was gathering at her feet—whose first unconscious blow was this very disappointment.

She sat for an hour, perhaps, sewing with thoughtful, yet mechanical industry, feeling just a little lonely and homesick for the sound of Frank's voice, the presence of his dear face. She was in no mood for the delightful little supper of strawberry short-cake she had prepared that morning; and so she sat there and waited for the swift, oncoming doom. And it came, just at the sunset, in a very ordinary way—as all of life's tragedies come, in the beginning—and was only heralded by the ringing of the door-bell.

Ethel laid down her work and went to the door, quiet, unexpected, fair as a lily in her proud, pure sweetness—so soon to be a lily with bowed petals and storm-tossed leaves, and wind-torn stalk.

A rather stout man bowed very courteously as he raised his straw hat; a man whose appearance bore indications of intelligence and worldly ease, whose manner was rather prepossessing than otherwise, despite his deeply-flushed face, a flush that seemed habitual, and the evident admiration that looked from his deep-set eyes.

"Have I the honor of addressing Mrs. Frank Havelstock?"

It was a voice that made a curious impression upon Ethel, and in the instant that elapsed before she answered, she thought how pleasant a voice his must be to any one whom he knew who cared to listen to it. Then natural wonderment at his presence usurped every other feeling.

"I am Mrs. Havelstock. You—"

She paused, in courteous questioning, her sweet, gray eyes watching him.

"I am Carleton Vincy, madam, a friend of—of your—husband."

He hesitated strangely, this man who did not look to be ought but fluent in his language. A vague uneasiness instantly crept over Ethel.

"He is not at home, or I presume he would be pleased to see a friend of his. If you have a message I will convey it to him where he is visiting."

Vincy's face was growing more and more pitifully grave. He looked at the young girl with eyes that expressed tenderest commiseration.

"My dear Mrs. Havelstock, I am awkward, I fear, but I am the bearer of news I dread to break, and—"

Ethel suddenly shivered from crown to foot-sole; her dark eyes dilated with vague, piteous horror.

"Come in, quickly. I think I am at a loss to understand your meaning."

She preceded him to the pretty little parlor, and motioned him to a seat, she remaining standing, just before him.

He gently declined the proffered chair, and remained standing, as did she, his hat in his hand, his face grave, his attitude that of a man who is burdened with a bitter trouble, who dreads to communicate what he knows he can not avoid.

All gladness, almost all youthfulness seemed to have fled from Ethel's white face as she stood and waited.

"You come from Frank? He is ill, hurt, perhaps dying? Don't spare me, Mr. Vincy, I beg of you. I can be brave and strong."

He looked so pitifully down on her trembling figure, her face pale with the insupportable horror of suspense.

"I came direct from Mr. Havelstock, my dear child; he is not ill, or suffering from an accident. Can you bear it?"

He paused again, as if in a pitifulness too deep for utterance. Ethel stepped near him, in a gesture of sharp, almost angry impatience.

"I command you to tell me—the worst."

Her voice was almost inaudible as she whispered the last words.

"It is the worst—Frank is dead, my poor, widowed young friend."

He extended his hands as if he feared Ethel would fall; but there only ensued a moment of frightful silence, when all her crushing agony rolled its billows over her young head; when she stood, as if turned to stone, staring with whitening lips and appalled eyes straight into Carleton Vincy's face—all her horror, all her grief plainly photographed on her sweet, anguished face.

Then a low, sepulchral sound issued from her lips that did not move as she said the awful word.

"Dead?"

No tears, no outcry, no moan—only this stony, horrid petrification of grief.

"It was very sudden—very pitiful, considering the circumstance of his recent marriage. I assure you every effort was made to save him; you can rely on my own word for that. I wish with him when the melancholy accident occurred—"

"Accident? you did not say that. He was killed—my darling?"

She gazed at him in a bewildered way as she spoke, in low, wistful tones, still standing erect as a marble statue, before him.

"It was while bathing, last Tuesday. We met, very accidentally, and Frank proposed a run down to the shore for a few hours. In the surf he must have been seized with cramps,

for he suddenly shrieked for help, and sunk before any one, even myself, could give him any assistance."

Ethel crept across the floor with lagging steps, and fell prone on the sofa, her face buried in her hands.

"Do I harrow your feelings too much, my dear madam? I will gladly spare you the recital."

"Go on."

Her low command was full of painful courage. Vincy smiled oddly at her bowed head, then went on, in his low, sympathetic voice.

"All our efforts proved futile; we even failed to secure the body until late last night—"

A scream burst from Ethel's lips, and she raised her wild, haggard face.

"And I was looking for a letter! and he lying under the waves! Oh, Frank, Frank, my darling, what business have I to be here, in this dear home where you placed me, and you—dead—dead—drowned!"

"It is an inscrutable Providence, madam, as difficult to understand as painful to contemplate. It is particularly painful, since you must be denied even the poor privilege of seeing his remains. They were in the water so long, that on my own responsibility, I ordered them conveyed to Greenwood at once. You will pardon me, madam, when you calmly think of it."

A shudder crept over Ethel's frame as she crouched on the sofa. Awful visions arose before her, and she realized at once, the delicacy and kindness of Mr. Vincy's offices.

"At Tanglewood they are in deep sorrow—he was a very dear friend and relative of Mr. Lexington, as you, of course, know. Even they were deprived of the same privilege of paying the last tribute to his memory."

Vincy had taken a seat by this time, and was regarding Ethel with an interest unusual with him. He scrutinized her beautiful head, bowed like a broken flower; her floating, luxuriant hair, on which a stray sunset beam slanted, as if in silent benediction; at her dainty hands, wet now, with freely flowing tears, at the short, round arm, perfect as a Venus's.

There was a curious red gleam in his eyes, and under his mustache an expression of grim satisfaction as he waited several minutes for Ethel to speak.

"You are very kind. I thank you, for—for his sake."

She arose from the low, crouching position into which his news had seemed to literally crush her, her face wearing an expression of utter desolation; her great, dark eyes burning like smoldering coals of fire, whose haunting wistfulness troubled Carleton Vincy for many a day after that one.

"I have simply done my duty—as I would expect a friend of mine to do for me under similar circumstances."

A little smile fled across his face as he thought of circumstances as they actually existed; then he drew several papers from his pocket—copies of the *Herald*, *World*, *Sun*, *Tribune*, and laid them gently on her lap.

"You will find accounts of the accident there, Mrs. Havelstock, of course, slightly exaggerated in some particulars, somewhat incorrect in one or two trifling instances. As a specimen of the fallibility of a news report, you will see in every paper, your husband's name is differently announced, while in none is it precisely correct. However, since poor Frank sleeps in peace, it makes no material difference."

She took the papers, mechanically, and read the marked notices he showed her, in one of which she saw her darling called "a Mr. Havestow," in another "Frank Hastock," while another, in eloquent imagery, portrayed the untimely death "of the talented young German Havelfrank."

Vincy watched her closely as she read them all—those notices that proved her widowhood. She folded the papers wearily, when she concluded.

"I would like to keep them all. It is strange they are so incongruous, but I suppose that is the way with all news, if we had the opportunity of knowing the actual facts."

Vincy's eyes glowed delightedly, but his voice was low and unexcited as he replied.

"There was no Associated Press reporter on hand, I presume, or the papers would have published the same report. As it is, it is really of little consequence. And now, my dear young lady, that my painful business is over, allow me to ask you, in Frank's name, what you shall do? Can I be of use? Do not hesitate to command me to the fullest extent of your necessity, or my ability."

She bowed with a grave dignity that was the more touching from her very desolation.

"I thank you, Mr. Vincy, with all my heart. I shall have to think upon my future before I decide what I shall do. For the present, I am provided for, as this house is rented for a month yet, and was paid for in advance. I have about three hundred dollars of my own money that I had when I was married."

She gave him the pitiful particulars with an unshrinking courage he could not but admire.

"There were only fifty or so dollars in Frank's portmanteau—I have secured that, and here it is. You will need it, poor child."

Her lips quivered; she essayed to smile, but it was more touching than grief.

"Please don't pity me, Mr. Vincy, I must get used to this sorrow the best I can. I am young, healthy and brave, and I shall not die of a broken heart, keenly as I feel the blow. People must endure, you know."

"You are right; you are a sensible woman, and I see you can manage your own affairs."

He laid the roll of bills on her lap beside the papers, then arose, took his hat, as if to go. Very gently, Ethel handed him back the money.

"This must go toward the expenses incurred in—"

She could not finish the sentence, but began freshly.

"It must have cost at least that much money—please let me feel he was no expense to any one."

Vincy looked at her a moment, an honest admiration in his eyes—perhaps the purest, most manly emotion he had ever been conscious of. As he looked at her in all the sacredness of her grief, all the bravery of her womanhood, all the high honor of her perfect nature, there came to him an impulse almost too strong for even him to resist; an impulse to bring back the gladness to her beautiful young face, the smiles to her sad, drooping mouth, even at the expense of his own character, and the oath he had sworn to Ethel's husband.

"Only a second—and the utter unfeasibility of the whole thing occurred to him—the almost impossibility of retracing a step he had taken. He remembered all he had at stake, in return for this very act, and others—and the one good impulse died a very natural death.

He took back the money silently and bade

Ethel good-by, in a gravely cheerful way, and left her to her sorrow—the lone girl, who had not a breast in the wide world to weep on, and between whom and the dismal future no arm was extended.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CONFERENCE ON THE WAY.

As the door closed behind Carleton Vincyn—the door of the house to which he had brought such utter desolation, a smile of positive relief crossed his face. He lifted his hat, and wiped the big drops of sweat from his forehead with the manner of a man who has successfully made a tremendous effort.

He walked rapidly to the corner where he hailed a car, and as he hurried further away every second, realized perfectly that he had accomplished his part of the business with wonderful ease and haste; that there was only left the delightfully congenial task of dealing with Georgia Lexington just as pleased him.

That ride was a memorable one to Carleton Vincyn. One is never so much alone as when in a crowd, and he realized it to be so, as he saw none but strange faces around him, all the way down to the pier from which the boat left for Tanglewood. Somehow Ethel's face haunted him—so overflowing with anguish, so perfect in its pitiful bravery. Her wistful eyes were haunting him like ghosts—those beautiful eyes to which he had called tears that flowed until they drained the very fountain of grief. Was it because his vile touch had unsealed that spring of tears, because even his calloused conscience throbbed under her womanly honor and mingled sorrow and courage, or, was there some other reason, whose very inexplicability puzzled him, that would not let him banish her from his thoughts.

Even now and alone his gloating delight that Georgia was still more surely in his power on account of his alliance with Havelstock, whom he knew was a potent friend, was the memory of the girl's face, the sweet gravity of her manner, the tender dignity with which she refused his assistance.

So he rode along, his hat drawn over his eyes, his hands thrust in his pockets—this man whom people had heard of as dead and buried, years ago, whom people had forgotten even the memory of—this fiend incarnate, whose sole mission in life was to torment and make bitter as wormwood the already bitter life of one fair woman.

At the slip, Vincyn left the car, and went directly aboard the boat, that was just withdrawing her gang-plank as he stepped on deck to meet Frank Havelstock, leaning lazily over the guards smoking a cigar with as keen a relish as though he had not been waiting for his agent in as deliberate and devilish a sin as man ever concocted or committed.

"Well—safely back?" Vincyn asked, looking Vincyn keenly in the face.

"Safely back"—an answer slightly emphasized, and fully as significant. It conveyed the whole story, and none of a dozen bystanders who heard it would have guessed all those few, apparently careless words implied.

Havelstock took out his cigar-case—a dainty, bronze velvet affair, with his monogram embroidered in brown silk upon it—tossing it over the guards smoking a cigar with as keen a relish as though he had not been waiting for his agent in as deliberate and devilish a sin as man ever concocted or committed.

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waves, and looked carefully after it before he replied.

"Frankly, I do not have the slightest idea. I know she could teach music, or sew, or take a position in a store in almost any capacity."

"It need not concern you. The bond is effectually severed between you, and the chances are that your paths in life will never run counter. She will be a poor, struggling girl, working hard for her own living, wearing her robe of black mockery, until, in time, she consents to be comforted again; and you, even your name lost in that of Lexington, the co-heir of the magnificent estate of Tanglewood, the husband of the rich and charming Miss Wynne, with your summers divided between Saratoga, Newport and your estate, and your winters between receptions, dinners, operas—is it in the bounds of probability that you will ever meet?"

There was a sarcastic pitifulness in Carleton Vincyn's words and tone, as he drew the true picture of their two lives—Havelstock's and the innocent, wronged girl he had so wickedly deserted—that made Frank regard him with honest surprise.

"You are not yourself; has anything happened to your temper?"

Vincyn laughed, harshly.

"Nothing, I assure you. Only, I declare I can't forget those pitiful, tearful eyes."

"You're a fool, Vincyn. If I, whom she loved with an intensity you may imagine, can throw her over without any particular qualms, I think you might spare me any dramatic conscientiousness."

There was a contemptuous severity in Havelstock's voice, and a cynical sneer in his eyes that effectually silenced Vincyn, who, for ten thousand worlds would not have lost Havelstock's powerful assistance regarding his affairs. So he answered, prefacing his words with a half laugh:

"You're right, Havelstock; I am a fool; but not the first who has been made so by a woman's eyes."

"A long, thoughtful silence fell on them. Around them were many voices, gay laughter, and the innocent mirth of glad-hearted children. The diamond spray dashed against the sides of the steamboat; the peaceful green banks seemed gliding by, in a silent, phantom march; overhead the sky was one speckless arch of vivacious blue, and as the evening gathered softly, slowly, and occasional lights twinkled from elegant residences along the river, it seemed as if the very hush of the sweet summer night thundered its disapproval on those two men's heads, as they hurried along, to forge other links in the chain of fate with which they should essay to bind their victims."

At the little dock near Tanglewood they found the Lexington carriage waiting. Frank jumped in, bidding Vincyn a hearty good-night; while Vincyn walked along toward the tavern, filled with bitter thoughts of Georgia, nestled amid all the luxury and pomp of Tanglewood—Georgia, his wife.

"Curse on her proud head, that I will bring to the very dust!"

He muttered the words as he glanced toward the spacious building, majestic in its massive splendor, that covered her threatened head.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 298.)

TO EVERYBODY.

BY FRANK DAVES.

You are a fool and I'm a fool,
And all the world is folly;
I'll take a glass of lager beer
To drown my melancholy.

The world is rolling round and round,
And our lives are but a twinkling;
Why should we not each time we roll
Be made the more discerning?

I know my brother is a scamp;
He knows that I'm a liar;
A woman is a gay coquette,
Or uglier than a friar.

But, why should we sit down and mourn?
You know in the beginning
It was ordained that man should be
Born to a life of sinning.

The worse than folly to expect
That man should be perfect;
If ever you thought any so,
Then drown your recollection.

Believe not in the man who is
Forever smooth and level;
A man may fly with angel wings
And be a very devil.

Yet, think no man is full of sin,
Because he's always willing;
A soul is far too grand a thing
To have so mean a filling.

Smile kindly on the world, as on
It rolls in rime and folly;
And take a glass of something, and
Be done with melancholy!

Pacific Pete,

The Prince of the Revolver.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "OLD BULL'S EYE," "YELLOW-
STONE JACK," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WORKING IN THE DARK.

Down—down, through what seemed an immeasurable space, fell Marco of the Scar. Down—down, for what seemed a lifetime—an age of horrible, killing suspense. Then came a dull shock—he had reached the bottom, had been dashed to pieces upon the cold, jagged rocks!

And yet—the pain had not been very great; strange, too, but though he believed the frightful fall had killed him, it seemed as though he was still hovering around the mangled remains, in a spiritualized form—as though he could hear, feel, and see, though indistinctly, as one in a dream.

He glanced upward. A dim, phantom light came shimmering down. Then, amid the soft light, a human head and face gradually shaped itself; a face pale as death, yet wondrously beautiful. The lips moved, and he heard a low, soft voice; the words escaped his ear. Again came the sound. Then another, far different, from close beside him; a deep, hollow groan.

He thought he glanced down, wondering whether the groan could emanate from the mangled remains of what had once been his body. But all was dark. He could see nothing. He glanced upward; the face had vanished, the light was gradually dying away; then it was gone; all was dark. A cloud seemed to pass over his sight—he knew no more.

"Sugar in a rag! Butter in a gourd; sweet Cornelle an' holy Moses! Lay fair, ye durned hedgehog an' quit scrowdgin' an' a-sharin' in' your dratted toe-nails on my hide! Don't ye got no more manners than to treat a—hellow! What the devil be we, an' where you, anyway? Speak out; none o' your skin games, or I'll plug ye like a ripe water-melon!"

"Old Business—thank God! How came you here?"

"Waal, I'll ber-dog-goned! Ef this don't beat the Dutch, an' the Dutch beat the—chaw my year! Lend me one whar I live, won't ye—do! Giv' me a horn-toad to eat; stick a horn-bug in my ear! Pent, sinners, pent—'cause the pizen tarantulo o' nat'ral cussedness is a-crawlin' up your trowser's leg—oh—ah!"

"It's me; don't you know? Mark Austin—"

"Oh guseberry juice an' bonny clabber! thunder-bugs an' mush an' milk! Kick me in the short ribs; comin' my whar with a brickbat, 'cause I'm too sweet to live, I be so! Hush! you're lyin', dog-gone ye; can't fool me! I'm dead, I am; fell down here, seventeen hundred million miles an' got splattered out like a buck-wheat slapjack—did so! Didn't I see the little devils in red-hot britches a sweepin me up in a dust-pan? An' 'yit—was I dreamin'? That ain't much smell o' brimstone, be thear! I've got a cold, reckon."

"Are you mad, old man?" impatiently added the other voice. "Don't you know me? We're here together, in a hole. I fell down—"

"So did I; 'twas last year I started though, I reckon. Mighty high started afore I tetch'd bottom. Easy, thar—quit kickin', dog-gone ye! Can't be more'n a foot o' air 'tween us an' Chinee-land. Don't want to bust through an' send us both on a journey to the moon, do ye?"

"He's either drunk or crazy!" muttered Mark, disgustedly.

"Thar's an' insult—an' 'yit, 'pears like I kin taste some sort o' lickin in my breath, a kin't all. Say—you; how long you bin in this place, anyhow?"

"Not long—it was last night that I left you and Pike."

"Wait—let me think," said Old Business, slowly. "Reckon I must 'a' turned a double sumerset, comin' down hyar, I'm so peckily mixed up, like. Last night, you say? Then I fixed up an' fooled the varmints, we spoilt a lot o' red-hot pizen; I mumbled drunk more'n I tended to, or else I tumbled down here top end first, an' the dog-goned wickler ran down into my head—that's it! Young feller, I ax pardon; I'm drunk—drunker'n a billed owl—am I a perfesser, too, oh—ah!"

"Well—there's one consolation; you'll have plenty of time to sober off on, so just roll over a bit. You come down on my—political economy—like a nightmare."

"That's it!" I felt sumthin' warm a-neath me, an' was afeard to stir, 'cause I think 'twas whar I'd bled to death. Thar—I forgive ye, ef ye did kick like thunder; only, your cushion'd be all the better fer a little more fat, lad, fallin' on them bar bones ain't much better then rocks—feel like I was stove plum up."

"Look here, old man," cried Mark, with ill-disguised impatience. "As you say, 'nough's enough an' too much's a-plenty! Let up on this nonsense now. We're in a precious hoble here; the question is how we are going to get out!"

"Stan' upon our heads, then let loose all hols an' drap up, feet fust. That's easy 'nough."

"Oh, turn it up! Don't try to act the fool; you can't improve on nature. Give me a straight answer, if you can. Who sent you here—who pushed you down?"

"N'body. Ye see, I kin about Jess o' this mangled you; I found out you was long o' this gang o' outthroats. Was afeard you'd forget us, so I kin to hunt ye up. Played bugs on the fools, cleaned 'em out at thar best games, then drunk 'em all drunk, arter which I sot out on a v'y'ge o' discovery—lookin' fer you. A durned fool wouldn't 'a' found ye, but I did. I sees this hole; thinks I, mebbe he's down thar—here, ye know. 'Twas my last chance, so I jest lepped—"

"Easy, old man, easy there," cautioned Mark.

"Taint my fault—I can't help it," protested Old Business, earnestly. "Ye see I got telled such gewollyollopins to them suckers up thar I can't scarcely quile my tongue up nat'ral ag'in. You jest g' me a punch or a histe with your hind leg, whenever you see me jumpin' the trail—"

"All right; I'll do it. But now, about getting out. What can we do? Can't you suggest something?"

"Climb out!" I'm wuss'n a tom-cat, that way."

"I've tried it. Though we ain't thirty feet from the top, if even half that, it might as well be a thousand. The hole is small up there, but it swells out on every side below—just like a funnel turned bottomsides up."

Old Business made no reply in words, but carefully picked himself up and when assured that no bones were broken, he slowly made a circuit of the walls, sinking nearly knee deep in the mass of soft, withered grass and moss with which the bottom of the pit was covered.

It may be said here that Isabella had been careful to provide against accident before she pushed Mark into the pit. Though maddened with unrequited love, she was not one to utterly despair at the first or second repulse. She counted upon reducing Austin by solitary confinement, darkness and starvation, until he would gradually yield to her wishes, fondly believing that her mad, overpowering love would win the first concession was made, soon kindle an answering passion in the heart of the young miner.

"It's a rat trap, sure enough," muttered Old Business, once more his natural self. "An' 'yit—thar's a r'angement here I can't make out—a sorter iron do'ny an' chain. 'F we only had a light; you hain't got no sech thing as a light 'bout ye?"

"No—nothing of the kind. I thought of that, and hunted close, but couldn't find a single match."

"An' I, like a blamed fool, when I sot out to play the high-toned Greaser on them galoots above, I left my fire-machine 'th my 'other duds. 'F wasn't for the noise, we mought easy git fire, but some o' them long-eared rips'd be sure to hear it ef we went to burnin' powder. You're sure—go through your rags once more. Mebbe one's growed sense."

A glad cry broke from Mark's lips as he held up something that glowed with a peculiar light as he rubbed it with his fingers.

"It's only a little piece, but perhaps 'twill do."

"Here," and the trailer eagerly clutched the fragment of a match. "Now to work. I don't reckon we want to roast ourselves, so we'd better crowd all this stuff into one corner. Work lively, now!"

The dried grass and moss were carefully pushed aside, and then Old Business prepared a little pile of the dry stuff to kindle with the match, while Mark nervously twisted up a hard knot of the same to serve as a torch.

It was a breathless moment when Old Business gently struck the match, and they watched the feeble blue flame as it flickered unsteadily,

seemingly expiring almost ere it was given life. But then—it touched the tinder—a bright flame started up, and a moment later the grass torch was ignited. Only with the greatest difficulty could the comrades choke down the exultant cry that came to their lips.

"Keep it burnin', fer your life!" muttered Old Business, as he eagerly examined the object that had puzzled him in the dark.

A stout piece of iron—evidently part of a revolver—had been set into the rock. To this bar was welded a chain, running from thence to a stout iron staple, to which it was secured by a large padlock.

"There's an opening here," muttered the trailer, in a low, strained voice. "Only for this chain—"

"We can break it—both together," quickly said Mark.

"We'll try; but mind the light; we may need it again."

Mark stuck the bunch of grass into a niche, and put a handful more beside it; then the two men grasped the chain. Once, twice they exerted their utmost strength, but the stout links would not yield. So absorbed were they in this struggle that neither noted how swiftly the frail torch burned, nor that the loose grass had fallen to the floor. Again and again, but without success. Then a low curse came from the trailer's lips as he sprang toward the expiring torch. He carefully fanned it with his breath, but in vain. The feeble sparks died, one by one; then all was darkness the most intense.

Without a word, Old Business pushed Mark aside. He grasped the chain, and with a power that was little short of marvelous, snapped the chain as though it were made of straw. The same effort did more. It caused a large slab of rock to grate upon its cunningly contrived hinges, and a cry of joy burst from Mark's lips as he thrust his hand into a cavity—his entire arm, yet he could not touch anything save the cold side walls.

"It's a secret passage!" he cried, hoarsely. "Saved!"

"Mebbe so—mebbe not. Don't crow too soon, lad. Here—I found the hole—let me go first."

Guided only by the sense of touch, the trailer entered, finding himself in a low, narrow, tunnel-like passage. Carefully feeling his way, he crept on and on, through what seemed an interminable space. The passage was winding and uneven, evidently following the dip and angles of the rock ledge which formed the bottom of the floor.

"Hist!" suddenly uttered Old Business.

A dead, heavy sound came to their ears. They could not place it. Now before, now from the rear, below and above, just as they turned their ears. What could it be?

And now, louder and nearer came the strange sound!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CURIOUS PROCEEDING.

We have seen how Old Business disposed of his captive, the Mexican outlaw, after having extracted all possible information from him; not all that he desired, still sufficient for his purpose. Then, squatting together beside the stiffening corpse, the two men consulted upon their future course. Lafa Pike seemed thoroughly aroused from the sort of half-stupor of the past two days, and appeared more his old self, shrewd, quick-witted, and sensible.

Yet he could scarcely believe his ears when Old Business made known his plans, or rather the skeleton of them. The Mexican had confessed that the outlaw retreat was near at hand, among the hills; also, that the two captives had been taken there. Though slender enough, the trailer declared this clue to be sufficient. He would play a bold game, would effect an entrance into the retreat, and, if nothing more, pave the way for a more systematic attempt.

Pike listened in mute amazement. It seemed little short of suicide, yet Old Business spoke of the matter as already settled beyond even remonstrance.

"You've got nothin' to do, old man," quoth the trailer, "cept to wait easy until we come back. You keep under liver; don't git too impatient, nor don't make no more noise than you kin handily git along 'thout, and that's all. You understand?"

Whether Pike comprehended or not, Old Business did not wait for an answer, but girded up his loins and strode away over the hills. In some manner he effected a wondrous alteration in his personal appearance, made an ugly scar where there was no scar before, and then, rigged out in the rich holiday suit of a ranchero, he stepped upon the stage as Marco of the Scar.

Pike, too uneasy to obey his comrade's orders, soon after left the little pocket where the Mexican had found his death, and stole cautiously along the back trail. Fortune seemed to favor him, for, while singly ensconced in a clump of bushes that grew beside a stunted cedar tree, he saw Marco of the Scar come up the valley, heard him challenged by a concealed guard, heard his bold reply, and, while anxiously awaiting the return of the man who was sent up the opposite hill with a message, Pike had time to recognize his skillfully disguised comrade in the tall, stately ranchero.

He remained in the bush, while Marco was escorted to the cavern; he waited until the party reappeared. He saw the outlaw chief suddenly level a revolver and fire. He heard the dull thud, he felt a stinging sensation upon one cheek. Fortunately for him his legs refused to obey his will, else Barada's second shot might have been sent after a flying target. Believing himself discovered, Pike could only hug the ground closely and pray for an unsteady aim.

Then came the second marksman; the severed thigh, not to the ground, but upon Pike's back. By this time he had divined the truth, but he did not breathe comfortably until he saw the last of the party disappear within the cave, without any of their number coming to inspect the double target.

Pike seized the opportunity to retreat, keeping well covered. He could not afford Old Business any assistance. The trailer was, apparently, on the best of terms with the enemy.

He, Pike, could only wait as directed.

The old miner glided along, every sense upon the alert for a time. But then the old, absent look came into his eyes, the expression of moody regret or of remorse deepened upon his face. He squatted down beside a moss-grown boulder, and gave himself over to painful brooding upon the past.

Two men came up the valley toward him, conversing eagerly. A louder oath than common partially roused Pike from his reverie. His head was lifted, his eyes were riveted upon the men with a vacant stare. He saw that they were roughly dressed, like old miners; that both were armed with knives and revolvers.

In addition, one man carried a heavy iron bar, the other a stout pick-ax. They bore the appearance of prospectors. The eyes

of the old miner were fixed upon them, but his mind was far away, busy with the past.

The two men paused when nearly opposite the miner's ambush, and cast long, searching glances around, as though to satisfy themselves that no one was watching them. Pike gave a little start, and his eyes glowed a little. Like all delvers for gold, he had dreamed often of hidden treasures, of fabulous stores of the glittering ore, buried by hands that never reclaimed them, of wonderful "pockets," where a single hour's work would enrich a man—ha! Might it not be here that Old Business had found his pocket? And these men—had they also discovered it?

Now thoroughly awake, his blood running hot and cold by turns, Lafa Pike watched the two men.

Whatever their purpose, they seemed to be in no hurry. They cast their tools down at the base of the rocky hill, and one produced a small flask, from which both drank. Then, lighting their pipes, they began work, by attacking the scattered boulders with crow and pick.

They seemed intent only upon building up a huge, cairn-shaped pile of rocks. But with what object? Pike could not even guess. He only knew that there was no treasure, no pocket in the work. The men plied crow and pick too lazily for that.

The work was slow and tedious. The sun set and night fell. The ambushed miner grew weary watching the two men, and sunk into a troubled reverie. When he roused himself, all was still. He glanced around with a half-stupefied air. Then the rock-pile glimmered in the last rays of the moon. He remembered all. He recognized the spot. Yonder, where that rickety old saw-boat, "was the very spot where all trace of Mark Austin had been lost."

"I'll see what it means—that pile of rock wasn't moved for naught," muttered Pike, as he left his covert and strode across the valley, never once thinking of the risk he might be running by thus exposing himself in the immediate neighborhood of the outlaws' retreat.

But old Pike was peculiar in more than one respect. He had suffered terribly in the past—until his brain gave way, and he awoke to consciousness in a mad-house. After years, he was discharged as cured. Yet he was never fairly himself again, and at times the cruel delusion seemed tightening round his brain, the dull, blood-red light to burn in his eyes, and the evil spirit to whisper black things in his ear.

Now, he attacked the pile of boulders with a vigor that seemed beyond his bowed frame, rolling the heavy fragments aside with seeming ease. At times he would pause, not for rest; fatigue did not seem to touch him. With bowed head and pendant arms, he stood deep buried in thought, for minutes at a time. Then, with the same cold, passionless demeanor, he would attack the rock-pile once more.

A gray light was gradually spreading in the east as Pike rolled aside the last rock. He stood there, then, a half-smile upon his lips. A glimpse of a brighter past was in his eyes.

The awakening came soon. He felt the ground shake beneath his feet. Scarcely had he realized this when he was flung violently aside, stumbling over a boulder. With an angry cry, he drew a pistol, but it paused irresolutely, half-poised.

The forms of two men sprung up before him. A glad cry rung in his ears, accompanied by a complacent chuckle.

"Old man—God bless you!" cried Mark Austin, as he sprung forward and grasped the bewildered miner's hand.

Old Business contented himself with replacing the cunningly-contrived trap-door, sitting the loose earth and gravel over it once more. He knew now how they had lost Mark's trail at this point.

"Say, you fellers," he said, bluntly, interrupting the explanations of Austin. "Spose you put off the rest till another time. I feel easier'n a bedbug in these parts, sence it's gittin' light so quick. Puckabe's the word."

"But these rocks—they'll see how we escaped—"

DESPAIR NOT.

BY J. H. HAY.

Cheer thee up, man! Look before thee!
Brood not on thy cheerless lot!
Fortune's zephyrs shall pass o'er thee,
When thou dost expect them not.

Near thee are thy children playing,
Speaking in their childish prate,
While thy heart is for them praying,
They unconscious of their state.

Peers talk of human weakness,
Erring is but mortal's part,
Ay, but still there's much of meekness,
Self-denial in the heart.

Man, thy babes shall be protected,
Shall a speedy aid be given
By the One who has selected,
Such as they for heirs of heaven.

Why despond, then, if luck fails thee?
Why not labor to overcome
Fierce Despair, that now assails thee,
Mocks thee in thy cheerless home!

Nick Whiffles' Pet:

NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS.

CHAPTER V.

GRIZZLY BEAR CAVERN.

FULL of eager hope, Ned Mackintosh left his friend, Nick Whiffles, and started toward the Blackfoot village, with the purpose of gaining one glimpse of Miona—she for whom he was willing to brave and to do so much.

Reaching the small creek to which reference has been made, he was not a little surprised to find an Indian canoe, lying against the bank at his feet.

"Now, if there is no owner near, I call that extremely fortunate," he muttered, as he furtively glanced about. "I can cross to the opposite side, and then, perhaps, when the red fellow comes back, he will think he forgot and left it there."

He gave one vigorous shove, and sprang in. The canoe moved about half-way across the creek, and began drifting downward, when Ned picked up the paddle; but, as he dipped it into the water, it occurred to him that the safer way would be for him to descend the creek to the river, and then steal along shore.

By this means he would avoid leaving the telltale trail that has proved fatal to so many similar enterprises. So keeping the boat in the center of the stream, he gently used the paddle, and glided easily down the current, reaching the river itself at the end of a few minutes.

Still hopeful and confident, he paddled along, keeping close to the shore, and was within a very short distance of the village, when he saw the prow of a large canoe, coming around a short bend in the river.

As quick as a flash the young man ran his boat under the shore, where the overhanging limbs looked dense enough to cover him, and with some apprehension awaited the coming and passing of this new danger.

He was not kept long in waiting. The measured dip of paddles came nearer and nearer, and when, nearly opposite, the bushes in front of him were cleft in twain by the prow of the other boat, and he was captured!

It was all done so quickly that the astounded young man had no thought of resistance ere he was seized and his arms bound.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, indignantly. "I came with the traders. This is dangerous to you!"

The last words were uttered in the Blackfoot tongue.

In doing so, Ned entirely forgot himself, and committed a blunder which he saw on the instant was fatal.

In the canoe, were both Woo-wol-na and Red Bear, and when they heard their own tongue used so well and forcibly, a dim suspicion of their at once became conviction.

The appearance of the young man with Nick Whiffles, during the early part of the day, caused both to suspect that he was the boy, lover of four years before, who had promised to return for Miona.

Still, the changes in his personal appearance were so great, that they could not dare to feel certain, until they descried him lurking in the vicinity of the village, and heard him use the tongue he had learned from his old friend Nick Whiffles.

Then, as has been shown, all doubt became certainty, and there was no hesitation as to what disposal should be made of him.

They could easily kill him, but there were some slight apprehensions that vengeance might be visited upon them if they did this, as the sharp eyes of Nick Whiffles would be apt to detect and report the crime, while he could be quietly carried to the rocks and dropped in to Grizzly Bear Cave and left to die of starvation, without the slightest trace remaining to tell the tale of his fate.

Understanding that he had sealed his own doom, Mackintosh attempted no entreaty, resistance or threats. The baleful scowl and exultant looks of Red Bear, and his equally heartless father, told too plainly that all would be thrown away there.

Sad, unspcakably sad as it was, he had brought his own fate upon him.

Speeding swiftly down the river, they speedily passed the village, and then on for several miles, until they reached the hard, bare rocks, where the heaviest foot could leave not the slightest print to betray its passage.

Here the body of the despairing, wretched Ned Mackintosh was lifted from the canoe and carried across the rocks to the opening of the cavern.

This was irregular in shape and some four or five feet in diameter. Holding the captive for a moment, one of the Indians cut the things that bound his arms, so that his limbs were entirely free, and then let go!

Down through the dark, cold air of the cavern he whizzed, certain that his last moment was at hand, and that the next instant he would be a crushed, a shapeless mass at the bottom.

But, instead of striking the flinty rock, he splashed into chilling water, sinking down fully a dozen feet, when he came in contact with the cold stone, and sprang upward again.

As he rose to the surface, he looked about him, but could see nothing at all. Every thing was blank darkness, and only when he raised his eyes could he detect the round, jagged hole above him, through which the dim, fading light of day entered. Striking out, however, he took but a few strokes, when he came against an obstruction, climbing upon which he found himself upon a broad, flat rock, clear of the water.

"Saved from one death to die another a hundredfold more dreadful!" muttered the poor sufferer, as he seated himself upon the rock, and endeavored to think calmly upon his situation.

The night so rapidly deepened that when he

looked upward, it was impossible to discern the entrance to the cavern, while the gloom around him was absolutely impenetrable.

He did not dare to move from where he was sitting, lest he should stumble into some pitfall worse than the one from which he had just extricated himself, and so he prepared to spend the night where he was.

"There is no possibility of my escaping from here," he reflected, "or they would not have cast me in. Nothing but the intervention of Heaven, through Nick Whiffles, can save me."

"Will he suspect what has become of me? I promised to rejoin him by dusk, and it is past that time now. He will wait and search all the night and all to-morrow, but there is no frail by which to guide him here. He is keen-witted, and so is Calamity, but what clue can they gain to my whereabouts?"

"Oh! if Miona could only know, how quick would she fly to my rescue! She would find some means of getting me out of this living tomb. I long for daylight that I may know precisely my situation."

He found that his revolver was still left in his pocket, with his powder-flask and ammunition, but his captors had kept his rifle.

He sat for a long time upon the damp, hard rock, but finally dropped off into slumber, which lasted through the entire night; for, when he awoke, the first thing that attracted his notice was daylight shining through the round hole over his head, and which let in enough illumination to disclose the entire interior of his prison home—Grizzly Bear Cavern.

It was over fifty feet in diameter, very irregular in shape, tapering up to a light nearly half as great where the opening was to be seen. Every side inclining inward toward this, one glance only was needed to show the prisoner that it was utterly inaccessible, that no gymnast in the world could leave the cavern, without assistance from the outer world.

He had some hope during the night, that some stream ran through it, and by means of a long dive he might succeed in escaping, but even this frail hope was dissipated, when he saw that it was not a stream, but a deep pool, which had gradually filled from the coozings through the sides of the rocks, and that when it reached a certain point, the overflow escaped by filtering through the ground and earth.

No; Ned Mackintosh was indeed in his tomb, unless some friend would come and save him. The more he thought, the more improbable did it seem that Nick Whiffles would suspect his fate, and slight indeed was the foundation upon which he could build any hope.

So excited and feverish and wretched did he feel for the first twenty-four hours that he scarcely thought of food. Back and forth he walked, pausing now and then to quench his thirst, and to keep his brain from going wild with the thoughts that were racking him.

Late at night, he lay down, exhausted and wearied, and slept a feverish, unrefreshing slumber.

He awoke several times, and his sufferings would have excited the sympathy of any one.

When morning came again, he was sensible of the pangs of hunger, and the thought occurred to him that possibly there might be some fish in the pool that were obtainable.

So he spent a couple of hours in groping around with his hand, and sure enough he caught one weighing nearly a pound. This he carefully preserved, eating morsel by morsel, until nothing but the bones were left, in the meanwhile hunting for more.

But search and work to his utmost, he could find no more, and he was subjected to the gnawing pangs of hunger again. Then came the pacing to and fro, like the caged lion, then exhaustion, fever and delirium, all alone in the gloomy cavern.

Night and day were all the same, and he lost the consciousness of the passage of time. Whether he had been there three days or a week he could not tell.

Why need he seek to know? Death was coming slowly, but surely. Why rack his brain? It only added keenness to his anguish. Forgetfulness, oblivion, stupor, were mercies now.

Then came dreams so vivid that he scarcely knew whether he was awake or asleep.

And lying thus, he seemed to see his old friend, Nick Whiffles, and Calamity, and Miona, floating through the air overhead. They seemed to be looking mournfully at him, and beckoning him to come.

He ought to move, but could not.

"Halloa, Ned!"

He opened his mouth, but the words came not.

"Halloa, Ned Hazel!"

He made an effort to rouse himself, but the stupor could not be shaken.

"Halloa, Ned, are you hungry?"

Again he struggled with the energy and desperation of a dying man. Rising to the sitting position, he gasped, moaned, and then feebly wailed:

"Yes, I am here, Nick!"

The strained and listening ear of the trapper heard the faint cry, just as Calamity's whine told that he had also caught the same sound.

"Hold on, Ned! keep up a good heart!" came back the cheery voice of Nick. "I'll soon have you out of there!"

Then the trapper rose to his feet, muttering:

"It's 'bout twenty-five feet down to that water. When I tumbled in, the other fellow had to cut a young tree, and pass it down there, and I climbed up it. I remember we drew the tree up, and threw it over the edge of the rock yonder, where it's layin' yet, if no-body hain't took it away."

A few minutes' search discovered the sapling, with its knotty protuberances, and this was carefully lowered down the opening, Nick calling out to his young friend to stand from under.

"Thar ain't much need of that," he added to himself, "for it's all water right thar, and so deep that the stick has got to be rested agin' the side of the pool."

When it was at last adjusted, the top scarcely protruded above the surface, so little was there to spare in the length of the sapling.

"Now, Ned, come right up—that like a monkey."

"Oh, Nick! I am too weak to stand!"

"By mighty!" muttered the horse-stricken Whiffles, "is it as bad as that? Then I'll go down to yer, and ef I can't get you out, I'll stay thar and die with yer. Calamity, you keep watch above, fur I don't believe you can climb a tree."

Fastening his rifle to his back, the trapper carefully descended, foot by foot, until he stood on the rocky floor below.

"Ned, my darling boy, whar are yer?" he asked, reaching his hands out in the gloom.

"Here, Nick, here!" and a staggering form pitched into his arms.

"God bless you, my boy!" murmured the trapper, the tears running from his eyes; "don't try to help yourself; I'll take care of yer!"

It was a work of incredible difficulty to ascend the knotted tree, with him in his arms; not on account of his weight, but the task of climbing with only one arm free.

The tree bent fearfully under the additional weight, and tough and muscular as was the trapper, he was utterly exhausted, when at last he reached the top, and lay down panting and almost breathless, beside the still weaker Ned Mackintosh.

But Nick speedily rallied, and lifting his "boy" again in his arms, carried him to his canoe, and then he sped homeward, driving the boat with the fury of a madman through the water.

Ned rallied and ate some of the food brought to him, and the trapper never passed through the night. The young man finally dropped into a pleasant slumber, from which he did not awake until the succeeding day was far advanced, when he roused up, ate more food, and then listened to the story of his true and tried friend.

When he heard all, and especially the part that Miona herself had borne in his rescue, his emotions can scarcely be described.

"The noble, brave girl!" he murmured; "she shall be rescued! Only wait till I recover and am myself again!"

"Yes; the first thing is for you to be yourself ag'in, and you ain't goin' to do that in a hurry."

But Ned did it in a hurry. Young, vigorous, and healthy, he speedily regained his usual condition under the careful nursing of Nick Whiffles, who furnished him with an extra rifle, and took him on several hunts, before he pronounced him fit to engage in the recapture of his beloved Miona.

Just one week from the time of his emergence from the Grizzly Bear Cavern, Nick Whiffles declared that the time had come for the rescue of the affianced of Ned Mackintosh.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE ELK RIVER AGAIN.

On the next morning a canoe was gliding down the Elk river, in which were seated Nick Whiffles and Ned Mackintosh, and the dog Calamity.

The former was in the bow, and with his rifle resting lazily between his knees, was watching his young friend, who was using the paddle, as he had been wielding it for the last two hours.

"How do I make out?" he asked, with his usual pleasant smile. "Am I doing as well as I did four years ago?"

"I sorter fancied you didn't at first," was the reply, "but you learned it too well in them days to forget it soon. I don't see as your stroke can be much improved. How's your wind?"

"All right; I haven't forgotten to take plenty exercise, although it has been of rather a different character from this."

"Hush!" Mackintosh ceased paddling, and the two men heard distinctly the trappers' song! It sounded quite a distance away, coming through quite an intervening stretch of woods, but it was unmistakable.

"I declare," exclaimed Ned, laying his paddle across the gunwale and leaning back in the canoe, "that calls up the past more vividly than any thing else. Don't speak for a few minutes, Nick!"

With which he closed his eyes, and listened, and as he did so, he felt that he was indeed a boy again. He was once more roaming through the great wilderness of the Northwest, chasing the antelope and buffalo, setting his trap on the mountain streams, and sighing and dreaming over the beautiful daughter of the Phantom Princess.

At last he opened his eyes, and said with a smile:

"The dream was pleasant, but it has past. Where are the trappers, above or below us?"

"Above."

"They are coming down-stream?"

"Yes; they are gaining on us pretty fast."

"Are you sure they are not Hudson Bay men?"

"They're Nor'-westers—I can tell any of 'em by their songs. Do you want 'em to pass us?"

"Yes; I would like to see them, and we will let them go through their business with the Blackfeet, before we appear on the stage."

Toying idly with his paddle, the trappers soon came in view. They were in three large canoes, averaging a dozen men in each, advancing with a regular, steady sweep, keeping time with the words of a stirring song.

"How natural that looks!" exclaimed Ned, as he watched them with a kindling eye; "I am living over my boyhood again!"

The trappers rapidly overhauled the smaller canoe, and as both parties were near the center of the stream, they came very near each other.

"As sure as I live," exclaimed Ned, in an undertone, "there is that man who headed the party four years ago. I think his name is Belgrade."

"It's the same chap; he's the one, too, that headed the attack on the Hudson Bay men, three years ago. He came near gettin' killed at the time, and he's powerful savage on your father. Don't let him know who you are."

"Hello!" called out the individual referred to, as he signaled to his men to stop rowing. "Is that you, Nick Whiffles?"

"I think it is," was the reply.

"Where bound?"

"Down the river."

"Who've you got with you?"

"A young friend of mine, a sort of visitor in these parts."

"He ain't one of them Hudson Bay men, is he?"

"Does he look like it?"

"Not much; have any of 'em been down in these parts since we cleaned 'em out so beautiful?"

"I haven't seen or heard of any. I don't think they will disturb you any more."

"I'd like to see 'em try it—that's all—I'd give a cargo of peltries if I could lay hands on that Mackintosh that played me such a trick four years ago. I heard he left the country after that."

"So he did."

"It's lucky for him—I've heard tell, too, that he had a son that used to be in these parts. Do you know any thing 'bout it, Nick?"

"His son was in the boat that time you and him came so near gettin' afoul of each other."

"Wal, Nick, I'll give you a hundred dollars if you'll show me where I can lay hands on that Mackintosh or his son. I ain't particular which one it is, for you make the one squeal through t'other just as well as if it was himself."

Nick waved him good-by, and the two parties separated.

"Perhaps, if I hadn't grown so fast, that savage fellow might have recognized me, and then there's no telling what might have happened," remarked Ned, with a laugh.

"He feels sore over the trick we played him that time. Well take it easy on the river, so as to be sure of not gettin' in thar way. And now, let me swing the paddle awhile," added Nick, reaching forward; "I feel the need of some exercise like that."

Ned consented, and while the hunter plied the implement, he lay back in the boat, meditating upon his errand, and upon its probabilities of success.

"I can't—not live without her," he mused, reflecting upon this charming beauty of the woods. "There has never closed a night around me that I haven't prayed for the safe coming of this day, and now that it is here, I am full of doubt and misgiving about the success of that which I have always looked upon as certain. I can only ask Heaven to be kind to us, as it has always been in the past."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RIVER.

WHEN night had fairly settled upon the river, Nick Whiffles turned the prow of his canoe toward shore, and they landed on the edge of the dense forest, walking inland a rod or so, until they entered a deep gorge.

"I've camped here before," said the old hunter, "and we'll kindle the fire ag'in."

"Are there no Blackfeet near us?"

"There may be in the woods, or on the river; but they can't see this fire unless one of 'em stabs his toe and pitches over into it. I find it rather cool to-night, and there ain't much of a moon, so I'll do as I've done before."

In such a place there was little difficulty in gathering sufficient fuel to last the entire night. When this was done, Mackintosh produced a match-safe, and had the fire started in a twinkling. Then they gathered about the crackling blaze, and while they ate their antelope-meat, discussed the all-important errand upon which they had come.

When the night had considerably advanced, the two stretched out, with their blankets about them, by the camp-fire. Calamity, who had spent most of the evening in sleeping at the feet of his master, now roused up, as if conscious of the responsibility that had suddenly been put upon his shoulders, and assumed an appearance of vigilance very comforting to his human companions.

"He can be trusted as well as ever," inquired Ned.

"I think he's a little better, if any thing," replied Nick, with no little pride. "He's more suspicious than ever, and he ain't apt to wait so long afore he puts his teeth into the legs of the animals that come around him. I'd trust Calamity sooner than any human I ever seed."

Calamity was not forgetful of his duty, and he maintained faithful watch through the entire night. Nick Whiffles, as usual, slept soundly and sweetly until daylight, but the young man was so preoccupied with his love for and fear about Miona, that his rest proved very unrefreshing. He awoke several times through the night, and sat up and looked about him. On each occasion he saw Calamity whisking about in and out among the trees, as lively and watchful as though his years were not rather heavy upon him.

Once the lover arose and walked to the edge of the river, standing there a few minutes, and looking out upon its unruffled surface. The night was quite dark, so that the faint moon gave only a dim view of the gently flowing river; but not a breath of air was stirring, and the deep, hollow silence of the solitude soothed his troubled spirit, and going back to the camp, he lay down and almost instantly fell asleep.

On this day they expected to reach the vicinity of the Blackfoot village, and, from the present indications, a desperate game would have to be played before the jewel could be abstracted from the treacherous hand of Woo-wol-na. It was well that the lover had brought Nick Whiffles with him, for alone he had already worn than failed.

"If I had counted upon any double-dealing like this," said he, "I would have brought a force with me that would have compelled him to perform his part of the bargain."

"I don't know as it would have done," replied Nick; "when a red-skin finds he is outwitted, he's apt to get desperate and play the old Harry."

"What would he do?"

"If he found he couldn't keep the gal, like enough he'd sink his tomahawk into her head, so you couldn't get her."

The two men loitered purposely on the way, so as to make sure of giving the North-west Company abundant time to get out of their reach. This was easily done, and early in the afternoon they caught sight of the returning canoes. Nick paddled up beside them to learn whether there was anything worth knowing.

He was told that Woo-wol-na was there, and it was of him that they had purchased the valuable lot of peltries they were carrying back with them.

Several cautiously-put questions failed to discover that they knew anything about Miona. The Indians had probably taken care to keep her out of the way of all visitors, as it will be remembered that five years before no signs were seen of her or her mother when the Hudson's Bay men made their visit to the same place upon the same errand.

These indications, although very slight, were pronounced favorable by Nick Whiffles, and Ned Mackintosh was not a little encouraged by his statements to that effect.

"You see, if Woo-wol-na is there, I kin go straight into the village without any dodgin' or circumventin', and I kin find out fur myself how the land lays."

"But he will be there to resist you none the less. You know his son?"

"Yes; he's an ugly young cub; he hates me like pizen, and would rather put a ball through me than not."

The afternoon was about half-gone when the two men came opposite a small creek, which put in from the northern side of the river, and which was not the one that drew Ned into captivity. Nick paused opposite it, and remarked:

"You've seen it before, Ned, but notice it now."

"One glance will tell me all I can know about it," he replied, looking in the direction indicated. "Why should I feel any special interest in it?"

"My idee is that after we start, instead of going up the river, we'll go up this creek."

"What is to be gained by that, as we shall have to return, or make an overland journey for a long distance."

"One reason is that I think I can throw the varmints off the trail, as they wouldn't be apt to think of our doing such a thing; and then by making a tramp of about thirty miles, I kin

strike another stream that will take us into the south branch of the Saskatchewan."

"If that is the case it is the thing we should do by all means," replied his young companion. "I never knew that such a thing were possible. How near are we now to the village?"

"It is something like five miles from here; I'm goin' to take you within a half-mile or thereabouts and then leave you while I go ahead and racky noiter."

"At night-time?"

"That's the time to go prowlin' 'round the home of the varmints, fur you musn't forget they've got as sharp eyes as you, and the hardest part of a scout's business isn't to see, but to keep himself from being seen."

At last the point was reached where the rendezvous was to take place. Whiffles ran the canoe close in beneath the undergrowth, where there was no likelihood of its being seen from the river, and cautioned his friend to be careful about permitting himself to be seen by any passing up or down the river. When they were so close to the village, it was by no means improbable that some of the leading Indians might be near at hand, and the presence of a stranger so near the village would be certain to excite suspicion upon the part of Woo-wol-na.

"I'll leave Calamity with you, as I don't need him," said the hunter, moving away; "the pup has good eyes, and he'll be good help to you in watchin', and don't get impatient if I ain't back afore the night's half-gone."

A minute later the trapper was making his way through the woods with the long, steady stride peculiar to him. There was a thoughtful expression upon his face, for none realized more deeply than he, the momentous errand upon which he was engaged.

The distance was short, and he was not long in reaching the Indian village. He walked boldly in among the lodges, and inquired for Woo-wol-na, but to his surprise learned that he was absent. When he asked whether he was hunting or fishing, and when he would return, he found no one able to answer his question.

After some pointless palaver, he made inquiry for Miona, as he said he wished to speak with her before passing through the village.

The answer to this was the same as the reply to the others. No one could tell where she was.

Nick was fairly taken aback for the time. He had not counted upon any such rebuff

SHAY.

BY JOE JOT, JR.

Do you know a man by the name of Shay Living here? You've seen him, eh? I've often heard him talked about. The meanest man without a doubt. That ever was born, so people say, is this notorious William Shay.

What rogues some people will get to be! Indeed, I rather puzzle me. To think that in a decent town a man's allowed to go up and down, having everything in his own way. As this detestable William Shay.

They say he's a rogue of the deepest dye. Will shoot a man at the wink of an eye, and lately in a drunken spree he raised a muss and murdered three. And shook his fist in the face of the law, and swore they couldn't bring him to law.

He's a very terrible man to meet, and no life's safe when he's on the street, and he's always ready to raise a row, and get the best of it, somehow; and everybody here's afraid to open his head to this desperado.

I tell you, stranger, if such a cuss would go to cutting his shins with us, there isn't a man in our town that wouldn't hurry to shoot him down, or strangle him up to the highest limb. So quick that his head would never swim.

That blackie, bully, rascal Shay. You've seen, I understand you to say? This monstrous, unhung ruffian and thief, I'd like to see him before I leave! You are the man? Well, I do think I beg your pardon! What do you drink?

In a Moment of Passion.

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

"The Hub" in the holidays. Snow had fallen from time to time until the sleighing was perfect. Sutton had his span of blacks put into the cutter, no easy task, for the fiery creatures had not been driven as much as formerly. The reason, that their master was more taken up with the attractions which Beacon street offered, and that the remonies there were too often supplemented by languet, or "Boston," while the fumes of champagne over night did not conduce to the clear eye and steady nerve required to keep the animals within bounds.

They were giving the groom trouble when Lonesley dashed up the stairs and into Sutton's room.

"Ready, Reeve? If we aren't off soon we'll have the party waiting. You don't look well, old fellow."

"I've a splitting headache. Not a new experience, but inconvenient to-day. The cold air may do it good."

"I wish you would let me say a word."

"Two of them, three, a dozen, if you like, so they don't comprise either a lecture or a piece of good advice. A stale story, those."

"It is only a warning this time. You are living too fast, and if you don't give over your loose habits you will come to the end of your tether sooner than you imagine. You haven't an iron constitution, and such as it is you are undermining it fast as a man can. With your talent it would not be pleasant to find yourself a hopeless invalid for life."

"You'll never find me such," said Sutton, coolly. "When I go that far I'll finish the course, depend upon it. Now—"

"Now you had better change teams with either Ward or me. Those horses of yours aren't safe; you'll get your neck broken with them yet."

"Terry Hart would sooner risk breaking her neck than bear a disappointment, and I promised her to drive the blacks. Much obliged for the offer, but I am quite able to manage my own team—my own affairs, too, if you'll pardon my saying it."

"Now, he's off in a huff," thought Lonesley, "and ten to one, he will be the more reckless because I interfered."

His apprehension was not realized. Reeve Sutton had too much sterling sense to resent the true friendliness which had prompted the other's warning, and he held the blacks in strong check, subduing their fiery paces and getting them thoroughly under control before he would permit that noted belle, Miss Teresa Hart, to take her place beside him. Thus it chanced that they were the last of the three couples who had elected to dine at Brookline that day. Lonesley had with him a sprightly married lady who played propriety to the party; and her sister, the pretty, rich Miss Breckinridge was with Ward, Terry Hart's cousin.

Ward both saw the prettiness and coveted the riches of his little partner, and he started that morning with the resolve to drive into Brookline with his fiancée if she would accept him as such. He put his fate to the touch right speedily and was at once refused. Then he cursed himself for the folly which had left so much of the distance over which he must sustain the part of a jilted lover, not a pleasant role at any time, the more disagreeable now that Sutton was Miss Hart's companion.

Ward liked his cousin Terry the better of the two, by far, but Millie Breckinridge had the most money, the best connections, and the finest establishment at her disposal. He had played for the highest stakes and lost, but was quite prepared to avail himself of his next best choice on the first opportunity which should offer, and felt tolerably sure of a favorable result, provided Sutton did not anticipate his proposal.

"Terry is as much in love with me as I am with her," thought Mr. Ward, complacently. "But the trouble is, she's sharp enough to see the game I've been up to. She may take Sutton out of pique if he speaks to-day, and hang it all the fellow looks as if he meant to."

The other cutter was close behind, the blacks coming with the long, smooth sweeps to which Sutton was holding them. He had found enough to do in this without saying much to his companion for a time, but that untiring pace and the sparkling day acted as exhilarants and he turned toward her, his face kindling.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

Terry shot one furtive glance at him from beneath her black, curling lashes, and took alarm at the expression he wore.

"Oh, this is well enough," she answered, discontentedly, "but not at all what I was led to expect. I thought you promised me something unusual, Mr. Sutton. I want to fly, to go like the wind. This is not half exciting enough."

Sutton laughed.

"I'll give you what you want when we reach the mainland. Just here it would be dangerous. Don't do that, Ward; keep your horses steady, man. Mine will not stand it to have you run away from us now."

Ward reined in his team with a suddenness which made them plunge, then, as the others came almost abreast, whipped them savagely into a mad speed. The blacks took this as a challenge, and laying back their ears, kept pace, but Ward either did not hear or did not choose to heed Reeve's warning cry.

Perhaps he meant to prevent the proposal of marriage which he feared Sutton might make—feared with good reason, for it had been in the latter's thoughts, expecting a different answer from that Terry had given, to make a pretty speech, bringing in the hope that they might glide on thus smoothly through life together.

"Oh, Mr. Lonesley!" cried Mrs. Ames, looking back; "they are racing on the Neck. I wish girls did know something. Of course the gentlemen would not be so thoughtless unless they were urged to it. What is the matter?"

Without answering Lonesley turned aside, stopped and sprung out of the sleigh.

"Hold the lines a moment, please. I think Ward's horses are running away and I must try to stop them. Great heavens! is he mad?"

Wholly regardless of his own danger and that of the terrified girl beside him, Ward leaned out and made a cut at Reeve's nearest horse. Like a flash Sutton turned in his place, and passion-mad for the instant, brought the heavy end of his whip in a crashing blow down upon the other's head, and, losing his balance, was himself flung heavily to the ground. The reins were wound about his waist, and he was dragged, as it seemed to him, through a red-hot blinding mist, which changed to blackness, and he knew no more.

He came back to consciousness in a place completely strange, and knew then that the glimmerings which he fancied dreams had been snatches of reality. They had shown him a low-ceiled, pleasant room, with muslin curtains and bright, home-made carpet, chintz-covered furniture and blazing wood fire, and stretches of snow rolling away over the near hills. Had shown him also a pair of sweet, pure eyes, full of compassion, as he fancied the angels' must be when they look down upon our struggles and temptations and weaknesses here below.

The room was in Hoesa Grenval's farmhouse; the eyes, as he discovered afterward, belonged to Meta, the one daughter of the house. A fair girl, with a broad brow, a tender, red mouth, and bright brown hair, slender and tall, lovely now and bearing the promise of a beautiful womanhood.

Sweet, shy Meta! How well he grew to know the soft touch of her little cold hands; how restful it was to drive the fever fancies out of his surging brain by simply watching her as she sat near him unawares, and how pretty she was when she chanced to catch his glance upon her, and flushed to the roots of her clinging hair! It was due to Meta that he almost forgot to puzzle over the mystery of his being there.

Farmer Grenval explained it in a general way one evening when he was able to sit in a chintz-cushioned easy chair in that cozy corner where the fireglow was ruddiest.

"You were used up bad when you were brought here, Mr. Sutton, no mistake. Shoulder dislocated, wrist sprained, head cut open, and one line of blue and black bruises from head to foot. But, mother's a capital nurse, and between her and Dr. Stone they've brought you through easier'n I hoped for."

Reeve thought of the brain fever through the mazes of which he had wandered for weeks, but said nothing.

"Sesin as it was," said Rob Lonesley who sent the letter asking us to take you in and in you well till he should come, mother couldn't have done more if you'd been her own."

"It was very kind of Mrs. Grenval; very kind of you all. I fear I have been a great trouble."

"No trouble to do anything for a friend of Rob's. A fine boy, Rob Lonesley; he used to be with us considerable in the summer-time. Chummed with a nephew of mine at school, you see. Smart, too. I do hear that he wrote a book since, and got it sold; more'n they all do, from what the papers say."

"Yes, Lonesley has already had fair success as an author, and will gain more. But what put it into his head to send me here I can't imagine. How far from Boston did you say this is?"

"Nigh upon thirty miles."

"And Lonesley speaks of coming, too; a strange thing for him to do at this season. That was all his letter contained—yes, you have told me, and the person who drove me here said nothing to throw any light upon the matter. It is incomprehensible to me. I'm afraid until he does come, or I grow stronger, I must remain and try your patience still, Mr. Grenval."

"We're glad to keep you for your own sake now," said with the simple truth which marks the true gentleman, whatever his outside polish may be.

So, Sutton stayed through his pleasant convalescence, gaining the hearty liking of the elder people, and watching Meta with a tender sort of admiration when she was with him, not thinking much of her when she was not, and never dreaming that he had appeared to her first like her ideal hero in his handsome young manhood, and that his very helplessness was among the things to win upon her. It made her pity him, and we all know what a short step leads from pity to love.

And she thought—in her innocence she might well be pardoned thinking—that his sincere liking was something more. She had never heard of Terry Hart, poor child! And as often occurs in like cases, through all his delirium Sutton had only revealed the better part of himself, and so vaguely that she believed him truly noble.

It was the middle of February when Lonesley came in upon them one day, unexpectedly.

"What, about again?" said he to Reeve, cheerfully. "I knew you couldn't help mending fast in such good hands. How do you find yourself?"

"All serene, thanks to the fact that my bump of ingratuity is not very strongly developed. But, now you've come, perhaps you'll explain how you came to land me here with such perfect lack of ceremony as attended the circumstance. My consent was an immaterial point, but how could you be sure of the Grenvals?"

"It was all right, though."

"Was it, though? That is precisely what I want to know. Come, speak out, Lonesley. Let's have the truth, the whole truth, and—you know the formula."

"The truth of what?"

"Everything. What's the matter, Rob? You are not generally so obtuse. Must I go through a full catalogue of inquiry? Why is this? Who brought me here, and why did he do it, and what has become of all my inquiring friends? Lonesley!" in an altered tone, "what gives you that look? Tell me."

"The truth is, I feared trouble through Ward. You remember?"

"I remember. He must have been drunk, that day, I think, but I'd have chastised him soundly if I'd got the chance, the villain! Well, what else?"

"Nothing else, except that you were in no condition to be troubled."

"Thanks for your thoughtfulness while I was not able to look out for myself, but as I don't care to rest under the imputation of being a sneak and a coward longer than is absolutely necessary, I'll go back along with you, if I have your permission."

"I'm not going straight back. I came to say if you can bear the journey in a week from this, I'll be here for you."

"I don't like to keep Ward waiting."

"He is not in the city just now," said Lonesley, turning his face away.

"Oh, in that case I don't mind. But I say, what of Terry? Has he been trying to turn her against me? He was sweet on her himself, you know."

"He is not now. I have not seen Miss Hart of late."

"Then she can't be going out so much. Is she wearing the willow for me, dear girl? I would like to know it."

"That is what they call it, I believe—wearing the willow," said Lonesley, and afterward, when he had gone, it struck Reeve that there was something strange in his voice and manner throughout the interview.

Had he kept something back? Did that something concern Terry? A couple of days brooding almost convinced him of it, and worked him into a state of nervousness which made inactivity a misery. When the farmer announced his intention of driving to Southboro on the third day, he was alert upon the instant.

"Southboro. That is on the Boston line, is it not? Then it will not be an inconvenience for you to take me that far upon my route. I have decided to return immediately."

Nor would he be moved from his decision, heard with regret by his host and hostess, in perfect silence by Meta, though her heart sunk like lead. She sat looking steadfastly into the fire, while the great farm sled was brought to the door, and Sutton was darting back and forth, brooding almost convinced of leaving than she had seen him before. She thought he was going without a word, but he came in presently with his light overcoat buttoned to the throat, and cap and gloves in his hand.

"Will you forget me before I come again, Meta?"

"You will come again?" the load suddenly lifted from her heart.

"Of course, and until I do you must write to me. Will you?"

The promise was given, a moment more and he was gone, but Meta had a hope to live upon, and was happy with that blissful consciousness of first love which makes the whole world rosette, and life perfect only once to us all.

He reached the city, lunched at a restaurant, thence to his lodgings and dressed, and went without one moment of unnecessary delay to call upon Terry Hart. He gave an involuntary start as she entered the parlor where he awaited her. She was so changed! People had called her dazzling, brilliant, a passion flower, a glorious woman, but in this pale shadow of a glory departed he scarcely recognized his love. For that very reason, perhaps, his impetuosity burst all bounds, and he was pouring out his heart to her almost before he was aware. Her haughty glance and uplifted hand checked him in the very midst of his impassioned speech.

"You dare to say words like these to me," she cried; "of all men—you! You dare to intrude upon me when you must know that the sight of you fills me with abhorrence. You might have been satisfied without this. Was it not enough that you made me desolate?"

He looked at her in utter amazement, then comprehended vaguely as he observed that she was dressed in deepest mourning.

"Forgive me!" he said in a subdued voice. "You have had a loss. I did not know."

Over the face of the girl went an intense white gleam.

"I never will forgive you," she said, hardly. "I may tell you now, I loved my cousin Ward. For you, if I ever see you again, I hope it may be when the doom you merit has been pronounced upon your head. But—I am still a woman—I will not be the one to bring it upon you."

She left him with the words, and like one dazed, Sutton passed from the house. He was standing in utter oblivion of passing events before him, when some one hurried up and grasped his arm.

"For the Lord's sake, Reeve," cried Lonesley's voice, husky with agitation. "What evil fate sent you here? You promised to wait until I came again, and I relied on your promise. Come, you mustn't stand here."

With a touch of his hand he twisted the other's hat low over his face, and beckoning a hack hurried him into it. He followed, and scarcely seemed to breathe freely until they two were alone in his own lodgings.

"Now," said Sutton, more than ever bewildered, "is all the world mad, or am I?"

"Ward is dead. Struck on the temple and killed outright by that blow you gave him. Now you understand why I hurried you to that out-of-the-way place and kept the secret of your whereabouts as I did. I meant to have broken it to you when I went there, but my resolution failed me. I have been making arrangements for your escape from the country—oh, dear me! I might have known it. I have told him too suddenly."

Sutton was far from strong yet. He had fallen back in his chair with a face like death, but had not lost consciousness as the other thought. Better if he had. Dead! Ward dead. It went through and through his brain like some weird, terrible refrain. He had not meant to do it, but in a moment of passion he had taken a human life. That bitter knowledge would never cease to haunt him to his dying day. In a moment of passion he had wrecked the fair promise of his own future, lost every hope and aim which makes life seem a pleasant thing to hold. He felt stunned, but he was submissive as a child in Lonesley's hands, and that true friend served him faithfully as a brother. Three days later he was on an outward-bound steamer en route for Havre, and did not know how he had been sought by the police, nor how narrowly he had escaped from them.

It was not until he was safe away that Lonesley took time to think, and then his heart misgave him for having sent Reeve to Grenval's home. He was troubled with a fear for Meta's peace. He realized at last that it was the glance of those heaven-clear eyes had left him incapable of broaching the other's unsuspected crime beneath that roof. The memory of those eyes lingered with him, and guided him clear of the reefs on which he had been in danger of stranding before, the temptations which beset young men in cities. Though they were intimates, he had never been so dissipated as Sutton, and the blight which had fallen so suddenly upon the latter, had served him both as a shock and a warning, but it was Meta's unconscious influence which acted upon him morally, leading him to strive after the good long before the reward which he finally

gained appeared to him as an object. He had a hope that the same influence might yet work Reeve's redemption. Surely no man could be long in that pure presence and not be touched by it; surely the time would come when the penalty attaching to that unpremeditated act of guilt would menace him no longer. He would return a better man, worthy of Meta, perhaps.

Alas! With the wide Atlantic rolling between them, while Lonesley strove for the better part, Reeve Sutton was wasting what was left of his manhood in a wild, riotous course in Paris, that most beautiful, glittering, wicked city of the world. Spring, summer, winter passed, and summer came again, and then he came home to die, a death incurred by the manner of life he had led. It came speedily, upon the second day after he had landed, before justice had time to reach him, had it been so desired. Infinitely tender in his ministrations, infinitely sorrowful for that end, Lonesley stood by him to the last.

Once they spoke of Meta.

"I promised to write to that little girl, and I've never done it," said Reeve. "I'll do it now. Pretty Meta! I say, Rob, if Terry had been as true as that dear child, I never would have come to this."

What a lesson to coquetry could it but be taken home!

Reeve began his letter. He told Meta how he had always remembered her tenderly, how the thought of her had always done him good, and how he had looked forward to some time seeing her again. In the midst of it he laid down his pen, saying that he was tired, and so—*ded!*

Lonesley delivered that fragment of a note with his own hands, and Meta shed the bitter tears of her life over it.

She was no longer the impulsive, light-hearted child, but only Rob Lonesley's devoted what had wrought the change in her. Those unfinished lines, reaching her as a message from the dead, lightened the burden she had borne. Reeve had not deserted her; he had always meant to come again, and to mourn him dead was less hard than to believe him false. It is easier to glorify our idols than to see them shattered at our feet.

But it is not in human nature to grieve always, and Lonesley had his reward when he called Meta wife. He never deceived her regarding Sutton, not even when, like the true woman she was, she confided to him that her whole heart had once gone out to another man and the calm love she would give her husband was not such as that had been. To have told her would have given her pain, and his aim is to spare her that, and to hold the knowledge of evil from her as he would keep any corroding agent from a perfect gem.

Those who know that Lonesley's wife is like the heroine of his best work, a pure, noble portraiture which did more to win him fame than any other character he has ever drawn, and I fancy the character really was Meta, placed in the wider sphere of romance. Her life, if quiet, is beautiful; widely different from that of a certain brilliant queen of fashion, the world-weary, disappointed woman who was once Teresa Hart.

Ethel's Blunder.

BY MARY REID CROWELL.

SHE was a womanly-looking girl; thoughtful, dignified, with a sweet expression of her dark blue eyes that had entranced other men than Guy Warrenner; but just now, standing on the threshold of Mrs. Stephenson's dressing-room, with one dainty pink kid partly buttoned, her white, gauzy skirts trailing gracefully around her, and her whole attitude and manner denoting intense attention, there had come a startled, surprised look among the violet tints of her lovely eyes, and an expression of almost horror on her face.

She had satisfactorily arranged her exquisite toilet, seen that her hair was just as it should be, and had drawn on her gloves, intending that Guy Warrenner, who waited for her at the foot of the stairs, should button them for her.

Then, her foot on the threshold of the door, she had heard her name spoken distinctly in the adjoining room, which she knew was the gentleman's hat-room for that occasion. Her own name, spoken by a gentleman, whose voice she did not recognize, but in such a way that she did what any woman so circumstanced would have done—stopped and listened, with that pained, startled look creeping over her sweet face.

"You don't mean to tell me Miss Marchmont is going to marry Guy Warrenner?"

"So I'm given to understand. Warrenner's a deuced lucky fellow, isn't he? She's worth a cool eighty thousand, if she's worth a cent."

"But she's old—she's none of your young girls. She'll never see twenty-five again—but then, Warrenner won't care for that, so long as the eighty thousand are forthcoming. Of course, he'll marry her simply for the money—Guy has always said he'd have a rich wife, or none."

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flush on her cheeks, that had been such a stranger since that night at Mrs. Stephenson's.

At Madame Delamode's, Ethel was ushered into the luxurious waiting-room, with whose arrangements she was so familiar, from the tall sea-green vase between the lace curtains of the bay-window, to the little square office that was partitioned off in one corner—an elegant little affair, where Madame Delamode's husband—otherwise Mr. Smith—kept the books of the establishment, made out the ruinous bills and blandly receipted them.

"Would Miss Marchmont be so good as to wait a moment? Madame Delamode was engaged with Mrs. Governor Hyatt, after whom Miss Marchmont would be served with pleasure."

And Ethel smiled at the profuse courtesy, and took a cushioned chair to await Mrs. Governor Hyatt's exit. There was a delicious little tinge of pink on her cheeks—sudden happiness that she had conquered her miserable suspicious doubts lent it; and if Guy Warrenner could have looked in her clear, calm eyes then, he would have been a very delighted lover, indeed.

Then—like a thunderbolt in a clear June sky, without a warning cloud to announce what was to come—Ethel heard Guy Warrenner's voice—clear, distinct—and he was talking to Monsieur Delamode.

Naturally her first impulse was to go up to the aperture in the plate-glass wall, and speak to him. She half arose from her chair, her soft cashmere making no rustle as she stirred, thinking how pleased Guy would be when he learned her errand, and wondering if he had any engagement that would prevent him from riding home in the carriage with her and enjoying a delightful *tele-a-tele* lunch—spiced salmon, lobster salad—

Her pleasant little reverie was abruptly cut short by Delamode's voice—decidedly American, despite the French name under which he sailed. Delamode's voice—loud, deliberate, not to be possibly misunderstood.

"If you really wish it, then, Mr. Warrenner, I will see what can be done about it. I am sure I understand it; you wish to break your engagement?"

Ethel suddenly straightened, her figure tensely rigid.

"That's it, exactly—back out of it, Delamode, the best way I can."

"I don't see how it can be done," responded Delamode, thoughtfully. "It's rather late in the day, it strikes me. Isn't the wedding set for two weeks to-day?"

"Two weeks to-day."

"Then I don't see that I can do anything to help you out of it—besides, you've got no good reason for backing down at this late hour."

"Oh, yes, I have—Ethel's heart fairly stopped beating as she waited for her doom, the "good reason" for Mr. Warrenner's "backing out" of his engagement to her.

"Yes, I have. I am not at all suited, Mr. Delamode. I certainly thought there was money in it, and as I have another and better choice, I certainly shall lose no time in getting rid of a bad bargain. There is one consoling thought—Miss Marchmont knows nothing of my intentions, and I shall say nothing to her about it until I have won Miss Josie Chase first."

Miss Josie Chase! Now, Ethel was roused from her momentary lethargy of numb pain. Miss Josie Chase—the old maid who was heiress of at least a half-million, and who owned nearly half the town!

So Guy Warrenner would give her up for Miss Josie Chase, with her false teeth, her false hair, her false eyebrows—all false—except her money! Heartless, cruel man, and to deliberately expose her—her, Miss Ethel Marchmont, to her dressmaker's husband, all for—Josie Chase and her money!

She started to go to the door that opened into this sanctum where dressmakers, husbands and engaged ladies discussed their affairs so confidentially; and the last, worst shaft struck her—hurled by his hands, too!

"You see I'm going to be cautious about it, Delamode, so that if I don't get the one I'll still have the other, much as I shall dislike the al—"

And Ethel's pale face and glittering eyes suddenly appeared upon the scene.

"Ethel! you here?"